

The Teaching of English Series

SEVEN MODERN PLAYS

No. 179



ALLAN MONKHOUSE

From a pen-drawing by his sister

SEVEN MODERN PLAYS

Edited by
JOHN HAMPDEN

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By the same Editor

BALLADS AND BALLAD-PLAYS

SIX MODERN PLAYS

SEVEN MODERN PLAYS

EIGHT MODERN PLAYS

NINE MODERN PLAYS

TEN MODERN PLAYS

THREE MODERN PLAYS AND A MIME

FOUR MODERN PLAYS

TWELVE MODERN PLAYS (Duckworth and Co.)

SEVEN MODERN PLAYS

PREFACE

THE welcome given to *Six Modern Plays for Little Players* has led to the publication of this companion volume, which offers, like its predecessor, a varied selection of short plays chosen for their appeal to actors and readers of about eleven and twelve years old. The two volumes therefore take their place between the same editor's *Ballads and Ballad-Plays* and *Eight Modern Plays for Juniors*, as part of a carefully graduated course in the study of drama.

This course leads up to the plays of Shakespeare, Sheridan, and others of our classical dramatists, and provides for a return to modern drama with *Nine Modern Plays*, *Ten Modern Plays* (both in this series), and *Three Modern Plays* and *Four Modern Plays* (in "The Nelson Playbooks"). The last four volumes, of which details are given on pages 220 and 222, have been planned for older pupils, and have proved very popular also with adult dramatic societies.

The editor wishes to express his thanks to the following authors and publishers for permission to include plays in this volume :

Mr. Clifford Bax and Mr. Victor Gollancz for *Silly Willy*, which has been specially revised ; Mrs. Naomi Mitchison and Mr. Jonathan Cape for *Nix-nought-nothing* ; Mr. Austin Hyde for *Wireless and Sich-like* ; Mr. Louis N. Parker and Mr. John Lane for *On Board the "Golden Hind"* ; Mr. Dan Totheroh and Messrs.

Samuel French of New York for *The Stolen Prince* ;
Mr. Allan Monkhouse for *The Grand Cham's Diamond* ;
and Miss Mona Swann for *Saul and David*.

The editor is much indebted also to Miss Swann for writing Acting Notes, and to Mr. Louis N. Parker and Mr. Austin Hyde for revising their plays specially for this volume.

J. H.

SILLY WILLY

By CLIFFORD BAX

CHARACTERS

SILLY WILLY, *an old soldier with a wooden leg.*

LADY SILVERLOCKS.

MARY ANN, *her maid.*

DR. BEDSYDE MANNERS.

WAGGLY, *a dog.*

Note.—The action alternates between (1) a street in front of Lady Silverlocks' house and (2) her drawing-room. Continuity of action, which is essential, can easily be secured by using a traverse curtain to represent the façade of the house, preferably with an inner proscenium in which is fixed, on the left, the (practicable) front door of the house. But the play can well be given in a simple curtain setting if desired. See the Acting Notes on page 202. When the traverse curtain opens, it shows the drawing-room.

The left and right of the stage directions are those of the audience.

SILLY WILLY

The Street.

[Enter Silly Willy, R., carrying a basket of laundry. He wears a tattered eighteenth-century uniform, and a patch over one eye.]

Silly Willy [*singing to the tune of "The Beggar"*].
To think an old soldier should come down to
this—

To carrying the laundry for master and miss :
Or, if you'll excuse me the manner of speech,
To carrying the breeches instead of the breach.

I'm bald as an egg ;

I've lost my left leg ;

And though I'm here working, I'd much rather
beg. [*He knocks at the front door, L.*]

Yes, I'm an old soldier. Fought for King
George the Third, God bless him ! [*Salutes.*]
Yes, I was present at the famous Battle of
Hastings.

*[The door opens, revealing Mary Ann, with a pail
and a mop.]*

Mary Ann. Morning, Silly Willy. So you've
brought back the laundry. I hope everything
hasn't shrunk as usual ?

Silly Willy. Water will shrink anything. I
never did like water.

Seven Modern Plays

Mary Ann. Put down the basket, and don't make a noise. Lady Silverlocks is that bad.

Silly Willy. Oh? . . . Is it mumps or measles?

Mary Ann. Yesterday was her birthday, and she ate too many chocolates.

[She takes the laundry out of the basket and pushes it behind the door.]

Silly Willy. Were they creams or plain? I love creams.

Mary Ann. As though a lady of title would eat plain chocolates! Get along with you.

Silly Willy *[taking up the basket and moving towards R.]*. I'm bald as an egg;

I've lost my left leg;

And though I'm here working, I'd much rather beg.

Lady Silverlocks *[within]*. Mary Ann! Mary Ann!

[Mary Ann closes the door. Silly Willy goes out.]

[The traverse curtain opens, showing the Drawing-room. The only entrance to this room is up-stage, L. Lady Silverlocks is sitting in a big chair, down-stage R., her feet in a tub. Waggly asleep.]

Lady Silverlocks. Mary Ann! Mary Ann!
Drat the girl! Why don't she come? Mary Ann!

[Enter Mary Ann.]

Mary Ann. Did you call, m'm?

Lady Silverlocks. Idiot! You don't suppose Waggly called you?

Mary Ann. No, m'm. He's asleep.

Lady Silverlocks. Yes! You two, you're al-

ways asleep. . . . I only get ill when I want to enjoy myself, and this time I'm not enjoying my bad health at all. I'm worse than I meant to be.

Mary Ann. Oh, deary me! You can't be going to heaven?

Lady Silverlocks. Fiddlesticks! Fetch the doctor—Dr. Bedsyde Manners. [*Mary Ann goes to door.*] And where are you off to now, pray? Stop here and turn my pillows.

Mary Ann. How can I do that and go for the doctor too?

Lady Silverlocks. Don't answer back. If I say you can, you can. Fetch more pillows.

[*Mary Ann goes out.*]
Lady Silverlocks. Waggly! [*Waggly lifts an ear.*] Waggly—my own precious! [*Waggly trots up to her.*] You know the tall red house with the green lamp-post in front of it? That's where Dr. Bedsyde Manners lives. Run and fetch him at once. You understand, precious? [*Waggly nods.*] Off you go, then! [*He goes to the door.*] Wait! Here's a chocolate. [*He comes back to her.*] Beg for it. Good dog! [*Waggly goes out.*]

The curtain closes. The Street.

[*Enter Dr. Bedsyde Manners, L., with a bottle of medicine. Waggly opens the front door and comes into the street. He looks round. Scratches an ear.*]

Dr. Manners [*as he crosses towards R.*]. Really, really, this is the most marvellous medicine in the world. It is not often that people get a medicine like this. [*Waggly trots up to him and pulls at his long green coat.*] Well, my little man, what is it?

Oh no, you can't have any of my medicine. It would make you dance on your hind legs for an hour without stopping. . . . Eh ? [*Turning back.*] You want me to go in here ? Lady Silverlocks not well ?

[*Waggly nods. Dr. Manners knocks at the door.*

Waggly barks. Mary Ann opens the door.]

Mary Ann. Oh, Dr. Manners ! You're just in time to save her ladyship from going to heaven. Come in, come in !

[*Dr. Manners and Waggly go in.*]

The traverse opens. The Drawing-room.

[*Lady Silverlocks has now taken her feet out of the bath-tub. She helps herself to another chocolate.*]

Lady Silverlocks. In for a pennyworth, in for a pound ; though I don't believe they really put a pound of chocolates in these boxes. . . .

[*Enter Dr. Manners.*]

Dr. Manners. Well ? And how are we ?

Lady Silverlocks. I'm ill—very very very very ill.

Dr. Manners. Ah. . . . Let me feel our pulse.

Lady Silverlocks. One moment ! That wretched girl always leaves crumbs in my chair, and they are so uncomfortable. . . . There. Now you can feel our pulse.

Dr. Manners. It is bad, bad. You must have been eating too many chocolates.

Lady Silverlocks. Only seventeen.

Dr. Manners. But seventeen big ones are equal to thirty-four little ones. Lady Silverlocks, you are suffering from chocolate-pulse.

Lady Silverlocks. Am I very bad ?

Dr. Manners. Very very very very bad. I am not sure that I can cure you.

Lady Silverlocks. Nonsense! If I say you can, you can.

Dr. Manners. If I do, what will you give me?

Lady Silverlocks. The rest of the chocolates.

Dr. Manners. Oh no. You have eaten all the top layer, and they always put the dull ones underneath. . . . I tell you what! I will cure you if you will give me your little dog.

Lady Silverlocks. Waggly? Certainly not!

Dr. Manners. Very well then. Go to heaven!

Lady Silverlocks. Stop! I will give you Waggly.

Dr. Manners. Promise! You can't take him back afterwards, you know.

Lady Silverlocks. Just make me well, that's all.

Dr. Manners. With pleasure. You shall drink some of my famous medicine.

Lady Silverlocks. But is it nasty?

Dr. Manners. Nasty! Why, it's simply delicious—like cream and strawberry jam spread on toffee.

Lady Silverlocks. Quick, quick!

Dr. Manners. Just one mouthful, and it will make you dance like mad. You won't be able to stop for the next half-hour. . . . Now! Open—open widely! There! [*He pours some medicine into her mouth. She jumps up and skips round and round.*] What did I tell you? Splendid, splendid! [*She dances more and more madly.*] And in case you are ever ill again, I will leave the bottle here. And now—where is Waggly?

Lady Silverlocks [*dancing*]. Waggly! Waggly! [*Enter Waggly.*] I can't stop. Go along with the doctor.

Dr. Manners [to *Waggly*]. Come along, come along !

[*Dr. Manners and Waggly go out.*]

[*Enter Mary Ann.*]

Mary Ann. My ! Good gracious me ! What-ever's the matter ?

Lady Silverlocks. The medicine—it's marvellous. But I'm getting tired. Stop me, *Mary Ann*, stop me !

Mary Ann. I can't, I can't !

Lady Silverlocks. Rubbish ! If I say you can, you can.

[*Mary Ann at last succeeds. Lady Silverlocks falls exhausted into her chair.*]

Mary Ann. Lor, m'm—it is a medicine and no mistake.

Lady Silverlocks. I'm well. Fetch me some dinner—and a bone for *Waggly*.

Mary Ann. You gave *Waggly* to the doctor, m'm.

Lady Silverlocks. Only if he made me well. So listen ! I am going to pretend to be worse than I was. I shall sneeze and cough so terribly that *Dr. Manners* will have to admit that the bargain is off. Run and find him !

[*Mary Ann goes out. Lady Silverlocks makes herself a picture of misery.*]

The traverse closes. The Street.

[*Enter Silly Willy, R.*]

Silly Willy. No ! I won't carry laundry another minute. All I want is sixpence a day ; and there's plenty of ways of getting sixpence. . . . Ah, here comes old *Dr. Manners*. And a nice little dog with him too !

[The front door has opened, and Dr. Manners and Waggly have come out. The Doctor crosses towards R., Waggly following reluctantly.]

Silly Willy *[meeting him R. C.]*. You'll pardon me, sir, if I ask a question. No offence.

Dr. Manners. The time? The time? Half-past four.

Silly Willy. But I don't want to know the time. I want to know whether you've sixpence to spare for an old soldier.

Dr. Manners. I never give to beggars.

Silly Willy. I'm not a beggar. I'm an earnest inquirer. I want to know if you have a three-penny bit for an old soldier.

Dr. Manners. No! And I'm in a hurry.

[He goes out, R. Silly Willy looks cautiously after him, then turns to Waggly and holds out the laundry basket.]

Silly Willy. Now then, my beauty! In you jump! Hoop-la!

[Waggly jumps into the basket. Mary Ann comes out.]

Mary Ann. Oh, Silly Willy—have you seen Dr. Bedsyde Manners? The missus is took that bad again.

Silly Willy. Hi! Dr. Manners! Hi! . . . But seeing as how there's going to be more trouble in this street, I'm off!

[He goes out, L., dragging the basket after him, as Dr. Manners returns, R.]

Dr. Manners. My dear Mary Ann! Whatever's the matter now?

Mary Ann. Oh, sir—her ladyship's took that bad again, and she says you must give back Waggly, because you haven't made her well.

Dr. Manners. Never! And I never heard such nonsense. . . . But where is he? Waggly! Waggly!

Mary Ann. Oh, Doctor, you don't mean as you've been and gone and lost him?

[They stand back to back, whistling.]

Dr. Manners. I was busy inventing a new medicine, and it's my belief that Waggly ran home again when I wasn't looking. Mary Ann, open that door at once! *[They both go in.]*

The traverse opens. The Drawing-room.

[Lady Silverlocks is coughing and sneezing. The medicine bottle is beside her.]

Lady Silverlocks. Mary Ann! Mary Ann! Dr. Manners! Mary Ann!

[Enter Dr. Manners.]

Lady Silverlocks. So there you are! Look at me! I'm worse than ever. You must give back Waggly.

Dr. Manners. Don't be absurd. You are hiding him.

Lady Silverlocks. But he followed you out of the house.

Dr. Manners. And you called him back.

Lady Silverlocks. I never!

Dr. Manners. You did. You're a cheat.

Lady Silverlocks. I'm not.

Dr. Manners. And I don't believe you are ill at all. You can't be, after drinking my lovely medicine.

Lady Silverlocks. Of course I'm ill. If I say I am, I am. Give me my Waggly!

Dr. Manners. Shan't.

Lady Silverlocks. You must.

Dr. Manners. Shan't, shan't, shan't !

Lady Silverlocks. There's no such word.

Dr. Manners. There is.

Lady Silverlocks. There isn't. I tell you, I must have Waggly.

Dr. Manners. So must I. You're perfectly ridiculous.

Lady Silverlocks. If you won't give him up, I'll throw this medicine bottle at your head.

Dr. Manners. If you won't keep your promise, I'll tear off your wig.

Lady Silverlocks. I think you're simply disgusting.

Dr. Manners. I'm not.

Lady Silverlocks. You are.

Dr. Manners. You're a mean, horrid, unfair, hateful old woman, so there !

Lady Silverlocks. I'm not.

Dr. Manners. I tell you, you are.

Lady Silverlocks. If I say I'm not, I'm not.

Dr. Manners. Give me Waggly !

Lady Silverlocks. Give him to me ! [*A knock on the door.*] Go and see who it is.

[*Dr. Manners goes to the door, back.*]

Dr. Manners. It's that wooden-legged soldier.

Lady Silverlocks. What does he want ?

Dr. Manners. Says he has a little dog for sale. Five shillings.

Lady Silverlocks. Buy it then, and give me my Waggly.

Dr. Manners. Buy it yourself. . . . Come in, my good man.

[*Enter Silly Willy, dragging the basket containing Waggly.*]

Seven Modern Plays

Silly Willy. Lovely little dog, ma'am. Bred myself. Had him these twenty years. Many's the time he saved my life out in Botany Bay. And all for five shillings, tail and all.

Dr. Manners. Let her ladyship see him.

Silly Willy. Anything to oblige.

[*He opens the basket. Waggly jumps out and runs bewildered between the Doctor and Lady Silverlocks.*]

Lady Silverlocks. My Waggly!

Dr. Manners. He's mine, I tell you.

Lady Silverlocks. If you say another word, I'll have a fainting fit.

Dr. Manners. Come along, Waggly!

Lady Silverlocks. Waggly will stay with me.

Dr. Manners. Don't be absurd.

Lady Silverlocks. I warned you . . . I'm fainting! Oh, oh, oh! [*She swoons.*]

Dr. Manners. Now's my chance!

Silly Willy. No, sir! Not while the British Army has a leg to stand on.

Dr. Manners. But it's my dog.

Silly Willy. And she says it's hers. You can't both have it.

Dr. Manners. Of course not.

Silly Willy. Yes, you can, though.

Dr. Manners. Both?

Silly Willy. Yes, sir. [*Speaking behind his hand*] Suppose you marry the lady?

Lady Silverlocks [*recovering*]. What? What?

Silly Willy. What do you say?

Lady Silverlocks. It's much the best thing to do.

Dr. Manners. He is wagging his tail! . . . I agree.

[*Dr. Manners and Lady Silverlocks embrace.*]

Silly Willy. I propose the health of the bride and bridegroom.

Lady Silverlocks. There's nothing to drink it in.

Dr. Manners. Nothing? Nothing? There's my medicine! Ladies first!

[Lady Silverlocks drinks from the bottle. She begins at once to caper about wildly. Dr. Manners, hardly able to wait for his turn, takes a long pull, and also begins to dance.]

[As Silly Willy applies his lips to the bottle, they dance off the stage. Silly Willy now prances round as joyously as his wooden leg permits.]

[Enter Mary Ann.]

Mary Ann. My gracious!

Silly Willy *[pointing to the bottle]*. Try it, try it!

[Mary Ann goes to the bottle and spills some of the liquid.]

Mary Ann. Oh lor!

Silly Willy *[still dancing]*. Never mind that. Drink the rest!

[She does so. They caper off the stage.]

[Enter Waggly. He sees the spilt medicine, laps it up, and, getting on to his hind legs, brings down the curtain as he dances a pas seul.]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING

By NAOMI MITCHISON

CHARACTERS

THE KING.
THE QUEEN.
NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING.
THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.
THE HEAD COOK.
THE WIZARD.
MARY.
THE FOREIGN PRINCESS.

SCENES

I. A Desert. II. Outside the Wizard's House. III. The same. IV. The same. V. The same. VI. A Forest. VII. The Kitchen of the Palace. VIII. The Banqueting Hall of the Palace.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING

SCENE I

A Desert.

This play is all meant to be done before a plain black curtain, which can be divided in the middle, and it will be as well if there are no properties on the stage during the first scene. The place is a desert, a long way off. In the left corner there is a bearded Wizard, standing quite still with his right arm stretched out, and a great, shining ring on his middle finger. He should wear long robes of black and olive green, and a black magic cap, embroidered with the symbols of his curious profession.

The Wizard. I am a wizard, and I know
The way men come, the way they go,
All to-morrow and yesterday
And the things that happen far away.
That which I want, the same I get.
And here comes one who is fish for my net.

[Now there comes in, R., a very weary and lost-looking King, with a traveller's cloak over rich robes, and a crown on his head, because he is the sort of King who prefers to be recognized. He looks round him.]

The King. I am the King of Strand-on-the Green.

The finest kingdom that ever was seen,
But woe's my heart for my kingdom !

And my dear queen who is waiting there
Has the bluest eyes and the softest hair,
And the reddest of lips that ever were,
And oh, I wish I could see her !

Much I've travelled and far I've been,
All the sights of the world I've seen,
But nought so fair as my bonny queen
And my own kingdom of Strand-on-the-Green,
Oh how many years till I find it !

[*The Wizard appears to the King.*]

Wizard. Wandering king who has wandered far
Into the land where dragons are,
Over the seas with purple foam,
I can bring you back to your home :
Where hedges blossom and thrushes sing
But all men mourn for a long-lost king,
Yet none so sad as a weeping queen
In your far kingdom of Strand-on-the-Green.

King. Oh my queen and my kingdom fair !
How can you hope to bring me there ?
What is your thought and what your art,
How can you see where I hide my heart ?

Wizard. I am a Wizard of high renown

[*He bows low.*]

—The magic cap to the royal crown—
Straight in an eye-blink home you shall be,
And Nix-nought-nothing is all my fee !

King. You shall have rubies, pearls and gold,
As much as your full-spread cloak will hold !

Wizard. What would I do with your pearls and
all,
I who have fairy gems at call ?

Promise me this for an easy task :

Nix-nought-nothing is all I ask.

King. Why, I have sworn ! Now quick to the deed !

I will follow if you but lead,

Take me there where I long to be,

And Nix-nought-nothing your price shall be !

[The Wizard moves suddenly and lays his hands from behind over the King's eyes. And while he is speaking, the King sways and staggers as though buffeted by a tremendous wind.]

Wizard. High-over-low, low-over-high,

I call, I call

All.

The winds in the sky !

Low-over-high, high-over-low,

I call, I call

All

The streams that flow !

Green of the land and blue of the sea,

And Nix-nought-nothing my price shall be !

[He takes his hand away and steps backwards and out through the curtain. The King stares all about him more and more amazedly.]

King. Oh look, oh see !

Oh tell me, where can I be ?

Is this my river, my green rushes growing ?

How soft the wind is blowing !

Are these my farmsteads, my young fields of corn,

My land where I was born ?

Oh my dun cows, lifting your sweet-breathed heads !

Oh my lost lily beds !

Is that my city where I held such state ?

Is this my palace gate ?

[Now comes in from the R. the Queen, crowned and robed, with attendants. Among them the Commander-in-Chief in the fullest possible uniform, and the Head Cook, with a large crown embroidered on his ample apron and magnificent cap. Beside the Queen is her son, a tall lad, dressed as a Prince in a bright-coloured tunic with a jewelled belt, short breeches and stockings, a sword at his side and a small gold circlet on his head. The Queen and King recognize one another.]

Queen. My King !

King. My Queen—my darling at long last !

[They embrace.]

Queen. Oh, the ill years are past !

[The Commander-in-Chief rushes forward on the King's R., and kisses his hand enthusiastically.]

Commander-in-Chief. My royal master, welcome home again !

I have such feats to tell !—such heaps of slain——

[The Head Cook now bursts forward in the same way to the King's L.]

Cook. My royal Lord ! My King ! Oh splendid sight !

Oh what a dinner you shall have to-night !

Commander-in-Chief. Bright shines our valiant name on Glory's scroll !

Cook. Pork pies and peacocks ! Oxen roasted whole !

Commander-in-Chief. Heroic hearts 'fore whom our foeman quakes !

Cook. Tremendous jellies and portentous cakes !

Commander-in-Chief. Our gallant armies ! All the world has heard——

Cook. Mountains of cheese, and lakes of shining curd !

Commander-in-Chief. See, see, the royal guards advance in line !

Cook. Great massy sturgeons, lobsters boiled in wine !

Commander-in-Chief. Victories !

Cook. Turbot !

Commander-in-Chief. Sieges !

Cook. Oysters' hearts !

Commander-in-Chief. Attacks !

Cook. Plum puddings !

Commander-in-Chief. Swords !

Cook. Delicious tarts !

King [*with his hands over his ears*]. My loyal subjects, how I thrill to hear

Your words contending for each eager ear !

But stay a moment !—oh my queen, my dear——?

[*He looks towards the Boy.*]

[*The Queen half turns to bring her son forward by the hand, face to face with his father.*]

Queen. Yes, yes, it is true !

This is your boy,

Our son, half me and half you,

Born the year that you left me,

Born for my only joy

When your sad going bereft me

Of all that I held so dear.

But I knew you would come again,

You would stand beside me here,

And at once I would quite forget

The years of sorrow and pain :

They have dried away like the dew !

But the boy is nameless yet,

For I left his naming to you.

King. My son ! Your eyes are as bright
As pools where the sun has shone
In the sweet morning air . . .

Prince [coming forward]. And yet not nameless
quite,
For a love-name at least I bear,
A token that you were gone
But would come, would come in the end !
Now you and I are one :
Father, I am your son,
I am Nix-nought-nothing !

*[But as they take each other by the hand, the curtain
at the back parts quietly, and all at once the
Wizard is standing beside them.]*

Wizard. I have brought you home and I claim
my fee :
Nix-nought-nothing was the price to be !

King [holding out his hands in horror and prayer].
My son !

Wizard. I come for the boy without a name,
Nix-nought-nothing is all I claim !

Queen [despairing too]. My son !

Wizard. This is the day they longed to see :
And Nix-nought-nothing must come with me !
*[He lays his hand on the Prince's shoulder, and the
curtain falls.]*

SCENE II

Outside the Wizard's House.

*One would like, of course, to have a black carved
house with small windows, and the sudden bulge and*

overhang of a twisted staircase ; one would like stiff borders of queer plants, dull green with white and purple faces. But if, as they should, the audience have read plenty of fairy tales, all this will be in their minds, and they will not need it on the stage. There is a heavy bench, carved and draped, and, sitting on it, the Wizard's daughter Mary, dressed in the traditional skirt and kirtle of dull blue, embroidered with silver, and her fair hair snooded with blue. She wears a long necklace and thick bracelets of gold and pearls, and sits with her hands clasped wearily in her lap.

Mary. No one can hear me :
The white owl only,
The forest haunter,
Is not less lonely :
No one comes near me.

There is no song here
But this poor Mary's :
My father's garden
Is full of fairies ;
They stay so long here

On wet leaves swinging,
And do not fear me,
But will not answer :
No one can hear me—
Oh, hush, my singing !

[Now the Wizard comes in, L., with Nix-nought-nothing following him. The Prince stays at one side, looking about him in fear and interest, and the Wizard goes over to his daughter.]

Wizard. Oh daughter Mary
I bring a stranger
To do my bidding ;
And you be wary,
And watch for danger :

Nor seek to aid him
With voice or finger,
When he asks counsel
For aught I bade him ;
Nor stoop to linger

About his doings,
Nor yet be sorry,
Nor call him friend
When Nix-nought-nothing
With sighs and rueings,
My anger's quarry,
His life shall end !

[She bows her head in assent.]

Mary. My heart is lead :
I hear, obeying ;
I draw chill breath.
Your doom is weighing
Above his head.
So many princes
Have met their death
When you ensnare them.
But oh my father,
My heart that winces !—
Will you not spare them ?

Wizard. My foolish daughter !
If you but knew
Of the secret maze,
The blood that's needful

For the magic brew !
But you be heedful
And go your ways.

[He turns away from her, and towards Nix-nought-nothing, who comes forward.]

Nix-nought-nothing. I am here, Wizard, to do your bidding. But who is she ?

Wizard. That is my daughter Mary . . . who has no power. I have a task for you, Nix-nought-nothing :

Bare is my byre
To winds and weathers ;
Its rafters bare,
For you to thatch
With brightest feathers
From birds of the air.
I give you a day,
Till set of sun :
Go or stay,
But it must be done.

[He points out to the R., and Nix-nought-nothing looks that way too.]

Nix-nought-nothing. And if I cannot do it ?

Wizard. Your skin shall thatch the byre, and your bones shall be the thatch-pegs.

Nix-nought-nothing [in horror]. No !

Wizard. But I say yes.

Nix-nought-nothing [desperately]. But how shall I get the feathers ?

Wizard. Bow and arrows
To shoot the sparrows :
Linnet and lark,
Follow and mark :
Cuckoo and jay,
Feathers all gay :

Magpie and crow,
Wherever they go :
Blackbirds and thrushes
Out of the tree,
Heron and eagles,—
Come with me !

[*The Wizard goes out, R., Nix-nought-nothing following him despairingly. For a moment Mary looks after them, then she speaks.*]

Mary. Father, father, how can I stay you,
How can I heed you, how obey you ?
How can I bear to know or see
The death of one who has looked at me
With eyes as bright
And with glance as light
As the brushing wings of the midsummer bee ?
I know my hour,
I know my power,
I see my way and I see it clearly :
Nix-nought-nothing, I love you dearly !

[*Nix-nought-nothing comes back with a bow and quiver of arrows ; he holds the bow drawn ready by his cheek and looks from R. to L.*]

Nix-nought-nothing. A bird at last !

[*He shoots upwards and to the L., then runs out after his arrow.*]

Mary. Nix-nought-nothing, my love, my dear,
Ask me to help you, I am near !

[*Nix-nought-nothing comes back with a bird in his hand, and again stands in the centre of the stage with his bow ready, looking about him.*]

Nix-nought-nothing. Ah, there again !

[*He shoots to the right and runs out.*]

Mary. Nix-nought-nothing, be wise, be true,

See where your Mary waits for you !

[*He comes in again with another bird, then suddenly drops both birds and bow, and covers his face miserably with his hands.*]

Mary. What is the matter, King's son ?

Nix-nought-nothing. Your father has bidden me thatch the whole great byre with feathers before sunset : if I have not done it, I die, but all the way I've got now is to shoot two sparrows !

Mary. I can help you, King's son.

Nix-nought-nothing. You ! But your father said—he said you were as powerless as you are beautiful.

Mary. Lie down and sleep, King's son, and when you wake the byre shall be thatched and no two feathers on it alike.

Nix-nought-nothing [*moving towards her, and the bench*]. Oh Mary, Mary,

Your eyes are kind

As the lit, warm rooms

That children find

On a late returning.

Your voice is sweet

As the winter apples

That children eat

For their sleepy suppers.

My eyes shut fast

Where your hands are making

A sleep about me

That will end at last

As a child awaking

On a sunny morning.

[*He lies down heavily on the bench with one hand stretched out as if to hold hers ; but she goes*

*past him, smiling, to the centre of the stage,
and there stands to say her spell.]*

Mary. Nix-nought-nothing, sleep sound, sleep
sound !

The byre shall be thatched,
My father outmatched,
And out of the woodlands all around
I call for the birds !

[She looks up, raising her arms.]

Oh birds, oh birds,
I am the wizard's daughter,
So listen to my words :
From air and from water,
From bush and heath and sedge,
From cliffs above the waves,
From tangles in the hedge,
From eaves and sunny caves,
From reedy river beds,
From oaken boughs that sway,
Listen and lift your heads,
Shake out your drowsy wings,
Faster than speech can say
Follow and flee,
Oh every bird that sings,
Listen to me !
Birds, birds, you that love me,
Hovering, quivering wings above me,
Swifts will not stay, hawks will not tire,
Go and thatch me my father's byre !
Feather of each
Give when I beg it,
Thatch it and peg it !
All to be done
By set of sun,
Quick, away, be it well begun !

[*She makes a great sweeping movement, upwards and outwards with her hands, and the curtain falls.*]

SCENE III

The same as the last.

[*Nix-nought-nothing is still asleep, with his bow and arrows beside him on the ground. He wakes and looks about him.*]

Nix-nought-nothing. Sunset !—Oh, was it true,
That fear, that striving ?
Mary, yes, it was you,
You who made sleep a stream
For me to dive in.
What was it then, your fair
And strange contriving ?
No dream, I say, no dream !
Words cast on the blue air,
Birds to the byre ! [*He stares out to the R.*]
Ah, how those roof slopes gleam,
Feathers as gay and deep
As my soft, dream-filled sleep,
Flowers and fire !

[*Now the Wizard comes in, L.*]

Wizard. Well, Nix-nought-nothing, how has your task gone ?

Nix-nought-nothing [*pointing*]. There is the byre thatched.

Wizard [*angrily*]. Who did this for you ?

Nix-nought-nothing. A bird with blue feathers.

Wizard. A pretty sort of bird indeed ! Well, I have another task for you.

[*He points down, and to the front.*]

That lake is brimming
With waters deep
And fishes swimming.
But on its bottom
I would pasture sheep
And sow brown wheat
And a road would make
Between hedges sweet.
Drain me the lake !
I give you a day,
Till set of sun :
Go or stay,
But it must be done.

Nix-nought-nothing. But if I fail ?

Wizard. The fishes shall eat your flesh, and
water weeds shall twine about your bones.

Nix-nought-nothing. But how shall I drain this
great lake ?

Wizard. A sieve and a dish
To take the drink
From the thirsty fish.
Stand on the brink,
The fish will see :
All uncaring,
Glassily staring :
Come with me !

[*He goes out, R., Nix-nought-nothing following him. Then Mary comes in, L.*]

Mary. When I am singing
There's one to hear me ;
I am not lonely
When he is near me.
The rain comes stinging—
I run to meet it—
Or storm wind leaping ;

I dare all magic
Now love is keeping
Me undefeated !

[Nix-nought-nothing comes back with the dish, and sees her.]

Nix-nought-nothing. Mary, I have to drain your father's lake by sunset, and all I have to do it with is a dish and a sieve !

Mary. Sleep again, Nix-nought-nothing, and I will drain you the lake.

Nix-nought-nothing. I trust you, Mary, and I will sleep.

[He lies down on the bench and goes to sleep. She kneels at the front of the stage, looking intently downwards, and reaching down her white palms as if to the brink of the lake.]

Mary. Oh fish, oh fish,
I am the wizard's daughter,
So give me my wish :
Out of the world of weeds and water,
Twining, shining, slithering stalks,
Dark green buds of the water-lily
Under the water spider's walks,
Softest slime where the bright and chilly
Eels go turning, with great tails churning
Rotted leaves into floating scum,
Out of the glistening deeps, oh listening
Thousands—myriads—fishes, come !

Fish, fish, you that know me,
Dimly shimmering fins below me,
Thirsty throats that no draught can slake,
Go and drain me my father's lake !
Goggle-eyes, off,
Make no long stop of it,

Drink every drop of it !

All to be done

By set of sun,

Quick, away, be it well begun !

[She makes a great sweep with her hands, outwards and downwards, and the curtain falls.]

SCENE IV

The same.

[Nix-nought-nothing is still asleep. Mary comes in, R., and wakes him.]

Mary. Nix-nought-nothing, awake, awake !

Drained and dry is my father's lake.

[He wakes and catches her by the hand.]

Nix-nought-nothing. Mary ! You have saved my life a second time.

Mary. But this is not all. My father will ask you what reward you wish for these tasks you have done. And how will you answer ?

Nix-nought-nothing. You know I will ask him for his daughter.

Mary. Then listen well to me ! He will change me into an apple and bid you choose me out of a silver dish of apples, all alike. But this way you shall know me. I will take my knife, quickly and secretly, and make deep cuts on my feet and hands, and you will see that one apple alone is scored and bruised.

Nix-nought-nothing. But, Mary——

Mary. I would do more than that for you, Nix-nought-nothing.

[The Wizard comes in, L., and looks first to the

front, at the lake, then at the two standing close together.]

Wizard. Well, Nix-nought-nothing, my lake is drained : but who did it for you ?

Nix-nought-nothing. A fish with blue fins.

Wizard. A pretty sort of fish indeed ! But you shall have your reward, my princeling : ask what you will of me.

Nix-nought-nothing. I ask for your daughter Mary.

Wizard. I will prepare her to be your wife ; come with me, daughter.

[They go out, R. Nix-nought-nothing paces up and down, waiting for the next trial.]

Nix-nought-nothing. What are you doing, my lamb, my dear,

In the wizard's house with your love not near ?

Is it the knife, my bird that's flown ?

What are you doing, alone, alone ? . . .

Will it end at last, our trouble and pain,

Shall I see some morning, my home again ?

Will the young men shout as they see us ride,

You, all day, a star at my side,

Will the sweet light dawn on my father's lawn

With my mother kissing the bride ?

[The Wizard comes back, carrying a great silver bowl of apples.]

Wizard. Apples are magic.

The lovely trees in May

Are more alive than people.

With autumn's ageing,

The apples' peering faces

Stare at one through the branches,

Like old men, calmly.

Of these apples, one

Seven Modern Plays

Holds fast your love.
Choose and then break it
Upon the ground :
If you choose rightly,
Appears at once your bride.

[*He holds out the bowl to Nix-nought-nothing, who picks up one apple after another, looking at them closely.*]

Nix-nought-nothing. Oh Mary, can you hear me ? Do you lie

Folded and tiny in an apple's core ?

Which are you ? Which ? Oh you, so dear, so
nigh !

Whisper—my name. The softest, faintest sigh
My mazèd heart would treasure and adore ! . . .
Apples . . . smooth apples . . . from an orchard
floor

Of silky grass-glades . . . two and three and four,
Sweet magic apples . . . five . . . I put you
by . . .

Oh, here's an apple with the knife's white score
Streaking its rosy skin ! I choose and cry
Mary !

[*He throws the apple with all his force on to the ground just at the join of the curtains at the back, and, as it splits, Mary appears, and the scene ends.*]

SCENE V

The same, but dark.

[*If possible, this should be played with the curtains just looped back, and Mary and Nix-nought-*

nothing close together, with one candle between them.]

Nix-nought-nothing. Have you found it, Mary,
Your father's magic ring?

Mary. It is here! Without it,
He will have only the power
Of a mortal man.

Nix-nought-nothing. And now, now, we must fly
From the magic house, the terrible power of magic,
Back to green fields and gardens,
Green hedges . . .
My father's kingdom.

CURTAIN

SCENE VI

A Forest at Night.

[A great pine bough might be hung or stretched across the curtain at the back. At one side there is a big pine log lying fallen. Nix-nought-nothing and Mary are clinging together, looking from side to side. He has his sword drawn in his right hand, and his other arm round Mary.]

Mary. My father's footsteps! Oh, he has found us!

Nix-nought-nothing. We shall escape with the dark all round us.

Mary. He is coming, following, oh, he can hear you!

Nix-nought-nothing. Courage, my heart, he will not come near you.

Mary. What can we do? Oh, where can we hide?

Nix-nought-nothing. I have my good sword here by my side!

Mary. Oh love, this terrible, wild alarm!

Nix-nought-nothing. My arm is strong as your father's arm.

Mary. Oh, he is coming, quick, he is here!

Nix-nought-nothing. He is only a mortal now, my dear!

[*He steps back a pace towards the log, where Mary stays, crouching and trembling, while he stands in front of her with his sword ready to meet the Wizard, who comes in R., terribly, with his dark robes swinging behind him, and in his right hand, too, a long, thin, shining-sharp sword.*]

Wizard. You took my daughter,
Who stole my magic:
You thought to fly!
Now I have caught her,
In life-long sorrow
She yet shall lie,
Fast bound for ever
In a tree-trunk hollow!
Oh foolish Mary
To leave your garden:
Shall dawn no morrow
Your bonds to sever!
And hush your cry,
For I will not pardon!
And you, rash thief,
Who would dare so high,
You, Nix-nought-nothing,
In pain and terror

Past all belief,
In fear and horror,
Prepare to die !

*[Mary waits trembling and clinging to the log, but
Nix-nought-nothing stands firm.]*

Nix-nought-nothing. I have your magic,
I have your Mary,
I know your power
Is spent and ended,
Your spells are dumb !
Oh, man, be wary
And well defended,
Whose short last hour
Is surely come !

*[They fight. Suddenly Mary starts to her feet and
comes forward, raising her hand with the
magic ring against her father.]*

Mary. My father's magic—
Turn on him now !
Before his anger
I will not bow !
Loosen the cord
That ties his sandal !
Soften his sword
To a melting candle !
Tug at his cloak !
Hands at his throat
Tighten and choke,
Teeth like a stoat,
Fangs like a snake,
Poison and tear
Within and without him !
Powers of air
Follow and make
Darkness about him !

[Nix-nought-nothing wounds and disarms the Wizard, who falls to the ground.]

Nix-nought-nothing. I have you, Wizard !

Wizard. Nix-nought-nothing,
Your sword went through me :
My power ends
With my ebbing heart's blood.
You will tell your friends
How well you slew me ! . . .
There'll be no sighing,
There's none that grieves
For my pain in dying.
Alone in the forest,
The birds will strew me
With withered leaves.

[Mary comes nearer pitifully and stoops over her father. Suddenly he seizes her hand with the ring on it. She screams.]

Mary. The ring ! *[But he speaks before Nix-nought-nothing can pull him away.]*

Wizard. Dying, I put a spell on you of sorrow and forgetting : and my curse on the stealers of the ring !

Nix-nought-nothing *[tearing his hand away from the ring].* You shall not ! You shall not ! Ah . . . he is dead.

[The Wizard dies. The other two stare at one another across his body.]

Mary. Oh, Nix-nought-nothing, surely our troubles are over now !

[But he stares at her ever more blankly, one hand up at his forehead.]

Nix-nought-nothing. Who are you, maiden ?

Mary. Oh, not the curse so quickly ! Dear, I am your Mary !

Nix-nought-nothing [shaking his head]. I have never seen you before.

CURTAIN

SCENE VII

The Kitchen at the Palace of the King of Strand-on-the-Green.

[A kitchen table, rolling-pin and board, largely labelled jam jars and honey pots, a copy of "Mrs. Beeton," and so on. Perhaps a row of frying-pans hung up behind would look well. Mary stands at the table. She wears an old brown smock to hide her necklaces and embroidered dress, and an old check handkerchief to hide her yellow hair and veil her blue eyes. She mixes the dough, chanting over it, with a rolling-pin for her wand.]

Mary. White Magic in the flour,
Yellow Magic in the butter,
Almonds, honey, cream and yeast,
Heave and mingle, sweet and sour,
Froth and bubble, make your mutter
"Wizard's daughter, we obey you!"
Kitchen Magics, hear, I pray you!
Now in oven let me lay you,
Cakes to crown a kingly feast.

[Now enters the Head Cook, R., in one hand a saucepan, with which he gesticulates and emphasizes his points, especially in verse.]

Head Cook. Good-morning, kitchen-maid!

Mary [bobbing]. Good-morning, your gracious head-cookship !

Cook [taking an attitude]. To what I am saying pray listen with care,
Hands at sides, toes turned out, above all, do not stare !

Nix-nought-nothing, our gracious, most well-beloved prince,

Who returned from his wanderings not so long since,

Will be married next week with a person no less
Than the Hoch Wohl Geborne, the eldest Princess
Of our neighbours in Flatland. Of course you will see

That the wedding depends almost wholly on me.
For the feast must surpass in its splendour and store

Any feast that has ever been heard of before,
With dishes so delicate, rare, and refined
As could only occur to my own master mind !
Now you, my good girl (and I cannot think why)
Have a hand for light pastry, in puff or in pie,
So my tartlets to you I entrust—not the least
Of the finishing touches that garnish the feast !

Mary. Thank you kindly, sir, I'll do my best.

[But she puts her apron up to her eyes.]

Cook. Why, what's the matter, my girl ?

Mary. Oh please—please, what is the princess like, the princess he is going to marry ?

Cook. What, the lovely, the beautiful foreign princess ?

Her refinement, her charm, I can scarcely express !
Her cheeks are like jellies, a dumpling her chin,
Like smooth almond paste is her highness's skin !
Her eyes are small tartlets of black currant jam,

Brazil nuts her teeth, and her lips bright as ham,
Her hair crisp and brown as a saddle of lamb !
Her hands white as halibut, delicate, fine
As the taste of a trifle just soaked with white
wine !

Her feet are so light, she could trip, it would seem,
Dry-shod on a lake made of chocolate cream,
While glow like fruit salads the jewels, the dress,
Of the ever-inspiring, foreign princess !

Mary. How—how beautiful she sounds !

Cook. Does she not ! But of course, my dear
girl, I have not so far actually seen her.

Mary. Oh ! Then perhaps, when you do see
her—

Cook. I feel certain that, when the happy
moment arrives, the princess will do justice to
my description.

[*The Queen comes in, L. The Head Cook bows,
and Mary drops a curtsy.*]

Queen. Oh dear, what did I come for ? Oh
yes, to be sure ! His royal highness, Nix-nought-
nothing, expressed a preference for duck's eggs
for his breakfast—green ones, you know.

Cook. The lightest word your Majesty shall
say—

Our loyal ducks will hear it and obey !

Queen. Oh yes, quite, and I wanted to talk over
the Wedding Feast with you. I think, perhaps,
in view of the importance of the occasion, the
Throne Room would be more suitable ?

Cook [*with a lyric wave of the saucepan*]. The
Throne Room clearly ! Since I prop the
throne,

As in a mutton chop its central bone,
Tender and strong, exists for it alone !

Queen [*a little faintly*]. Oh, quite !

[*They go out, L.*]

Mary. Oh, my dear, that I love so well,
How can I break my father's spell ?
Could you but hear me sadly sigh
What is the charm you can know me by ?
Now you are prince and beyond my reach,
How can I hope to find or teach
Your heart forgetting, in magic stayed,
I, who am only a kitchen-maid ?

[*The Head Cook re-enters hurriedly, L. Mary looks round, startled.*]

Cook [*with importance*]. Ah, I must hurry,
must never be late

On any account at a Council of State !
What eyes, my girl ! But you well may look :
The King has asked for the cookery book !
And you must most gravely consider your part
Of the wedding feast—in your deepest heart
Cherish the thought of each royal tart !

[*He finds "Mrs. Beeton" on the table, and hurries out again, L.*]

Mary [*bitterly*]. So this is the end of my magic
power,

The wizard's garden, the fairies' hour !

Nix-nought-nothing, oh far away :

The kitchen for me on your wedding day !

[*She stays looking down at the table and the half-mixed dough, then suddenly looks up.*]

And yet—perhaps—do I see a light,
Is this the road through sorrow and night ?
Oh birds, oh fishes, oh apple split,
Do you point my path towards ending it ?
Oh my love, will you know the sign
When you are eating those tarts of mine ?

Will you remember, quick or slow ?
Only a week until I know !
Oh my dear—if I find the way—
Only a week till your wedding day !

CURTAIN

SCENE VIII

The Banqueting Hall of the Palace.

[*A fairly long table, with the King sitting behind it immediately in the middle ; on his right, the Queen ; next to her, round the corner of the table and sideways to the audience, the Commander-in-Chief. On the King's left, the Foreign Princess, and on her left again, and opposite the Commander-in-Chief, Nix-nought-nothing. This is the High Table ; the rest of the feast is happening off the stage.*

There should be as much gorgeousness as possible about this scene. Thick strips of tinsel, particularly the gold and coppery sort, looped and hung against the back curtain and over the table among the dishes and candles ; a few bright flowers strewn about the table and floor ; a piece of coloured brocade—a curtain perhaps—corner-wise as a table-cloth. The solid part of the feast is over, but there are still large heaped dishes of cakes and fruit. Grapes and pineapples always look particularly magnificent. Every one should be robed as formally as possible. The Foreign Princess

should if possible be beautiful, though darker than Mary, but need not be intelligent. She wears white and gold, and a veil over her hair, held in place by a crown of flowers ; she does not move much nor look anywhere but in front of her. The King and Queen are both very gay, and Nix-nought-nothing is gay too by moments, but then again sad and puzzled. He leans an arm on the table, pulling at the fruit in front of him. All are eating, but rather from greed than hunger.

This would be a very good moment for any of the cast's friends or relations who want to sing or dance. A home-made ballet, or part-songs, rounds and catches best of all, would be delightful, but the singers or dancers must remember that space (as well as time) is limited, and the table cannot be pushed right to the back of the stage, as then the actors, who are really more important, will not be able to be heard.]

King. Well, everything has gone very happily so far. [*To the Princess*] You look charming, my dear ! [*To the Queen*] And so do you ! Six months ago we should never have believed this could happen.

Queen. After that dreadful wizard stole away our poor boy !

Commander-in-Chief. But how magnificently our Prince revenged himself on the wicked man ! What an example to all of us !

Nix-nought-nothing [*shaking his head, troubled*]. I can remember so little.

King. But now we shall all live merrily, Yes, and for ever after !

Nix-nought-nothing

The prince who marries the princess—
Everywhere song and laughter,
Hall and parlour and kitchen
Happy from floor to rafter !

Queen. Children dance in the woodlands
In and out of the shadows,
Milkmaids dance round the may-poles,
Shepherds pipe in the meadows,
Swords are turned into ploughshares—

Commander-in-Chief. Oh not that, your Majesty, I beg of you ! Leave us our swords !

[The Head Cook comes in proudly, R., carrying an enormous tray covered with small dishes of sweets and cakes, among them Mary's little tarts. He offers them to all, from the front, leaning sideways over the table.]

Cook. Your Majesties—Highnesses—deign to partake :

A biscuit—a jelly—a tartlet—a cake !

Compounded of spice

And of everything nice,

The delicate pastry will crumble and flake

And melt in your mouth

Like a breeze from the south !

Observe with what crispness a biscuit can break——

[Nix-nought-nothing chooses one of Mary's little tarts.]

Commander-in-Chief [to Cook]. I beg you, be calm, since you merely distress

The Pride-of-the-Army, our lovely Princess !

Your foolish excitement is nothing but waste,

Since my conversation is more to her taste !

[In the meantime Nix-nought-nothing is eating the tart. He finds something hidden in it.]

Nix-nought-nothing. What is this ? A feather !

Commander-in-Chief (*pointedly*). How very careless!

Nix-nought-nothing. Oh no, oh no,

A feather . . .

Oh, was I awake then or only dreaming?

Did I see fire and snow

Piling together?

Was it a rainbow there, a great rainbow gleaming?

Or birds' feathers there,

High, high, up in air,

Oh, look, higher!

Clear it is, plain to see,

Roof-beams and cross-tree,

Birds thatch the byre! . . .

Then, was it waking or dream?

Real now, true it would seem,

But, if life holds it yet,

How—how—could I forget?

Queen [*anxiously*]. My dear! I am afraid you must be feeling ill!

Nix-nought-nothing. No, no, it was nothing.

[*Absently, he takes another tart and bites into it.*]

Commander-in-Chief. Superbly dreamt, my prince! Now, I remember

A dream I had—a battle—last November!

My charger pranced! My men stood armed and steady—

My plans prepared—my cannon loaded ready!

But just as we were full in act to fall

Upon the foe, I found my cannon all

Loaded with sausages!

Cook [*with a certain bitterness*]. And I dreamt last night that I was making a pudding—oh such a succulent and delicious pudding! And just as

I was dishing it up, what did it do but turn into one of your disgusting cannon balls !

[Nix-nought-nothing has eaten the tart, and again finds something hidden in it.]

Nix-nought-nothing. Oh, what is this shining thing ? A fish's fin !

Cook. Impossible !

Nix-nought-nothing. Look ! In my hand
A fish's fin . . .

Oh it comes back, comes back, my dream again !

Who on that bank could stand,

Who, gazing in,

Could call the fish, her father's lake to drain ? . . .

Fishes hurrying, circling near,

Gliding, sliding, in waters clear . . .

And this—this too was part !

He held, all sharp, my host—

I can remember alinost—

A knife at my heart !

Then, did I dream or wake ?

She, on the brink of the lake—

Oh, if life holds her yet,

How—how could I forget ?

King [very anxiously]. My dear boy, do please try not to remember these dreams of yours just at the moment !

Cook [nervous]. Try a little fruit, your highness !

[Nix-nought-nothing puts his hand into the bowl of fruit and takes out an apple, which splits into two in his hand.]

Nix-nought-nothing. The split apple !

Queen. How very awkward that these things should have happened at your wedding !

Commander-in-Chief [coldly, with an eye on the Cook]. Most unfortunate !

Nix-nought-nothing [standing, happily, with the apple in his hand]. This is the split apple.

She will be coming now,

Mary, Mary, creeping like a small brown mouse
Across the forest, hiding, between bracken and
bough,

Away from the power of magic, her father's lonely
house.

How did I come to lose you, Mary, my Mary,
Where have you gone, leaving me all astray ?

In what wild hills do you go, fleeting and airy ?

Where have you been all these months ? Where
are you to-day ?

[*He stands there with his arms out, and at last the Foreign Princess rises and speaks indignantly.*]

Princess. Who is this Mary ?

Nix-nought-nothing [crying out]. Where is she ?

King [furiously]. Who is she ?

Queen [tearfully]. Why is she ?

Commander-in-Chief [cleverly]. When was she ?

Nix-nought-nothing [suddenly]. Who baked those
tarts ?

Cook. Please your highness, not me !

Nix-nought-nothing. I know that ! Who was it ?

Cook. I—I think it may have been the new
kitchen-maid.

Nix-nought-nothing. Send for her !

[*The Cook rushes out precipitately, R. Nix-nought-nothing is now standing in front, clear of the table.*]

Princess [rising too]. I will not stay here !

Queen [trying to calm her]. I feel sure, my dear,
his will turn out to be nothing—a mere wild-
goose chase !

Searching for things which don't exist

Princess. I do not like wild geese.

[*Re-enter the Cook, R., with Mary beside him ; she stands, looking across the stage at Nix-nought-nothing.*]

Cook. Actually—she was listening behind the door !

Mary. Do you remember me,
Is it well, is it well,
Oh, love, do you know me ?
Have I broken my father's spell ?
Reach out your hand and show me !

Nix-nought-nothing. Mary, oh found again.
My dear, my dear, it is you !
Oh, well I know you !
To-day my dreams come true,
This is my hour to show you !

[*They move towards one another, take hands and kiss.*]

Queen [*to Cook*]. Who is this girl ? Where did she come from ?

Cook [*trembling*]. Indeed, your Majesty—please your Majesty——

Nix-nought-nothing [*turning to the table*]. Here is my true bride !

King. That kitchen slut !

[*Mary unties the handkerchief from her head, steps clear of her old smock, and appears before them in all her beauty.*]

Mary. I am the wizard's daughter,
Look at my ring !
Mistress of air and water,
And all white magics that spring
From bees and flowers and cornfields,
And sunshine in the morning,
And every common thing.

Now after sorrow and pain
And a long, long waiting,
I come at last to my mating,
Back to my love again :
Look well at my ring !

*[They all stare at her and the ring. By-and-by
the King speaks, rather bewildered.]*

King. She seems a most intelligent lady.

Queen. And beautiful.

Commander-in-Chief. Most certainly !

Princess. I will go !

Nix-nought-nothing *[standing with Mary's hand
in his]*. Oh father dear, oh mother dear,

I bring a lovely guest ;
For your princess is the finest maid
Between the east and the west,
But there is one I'd rather have
Than her and all the rest :
For my lass,
The shy lass,
Is the lass I love best !

Out of the clouds, the wheeling birds,
For feathers she besought,
For our love's sake to drain the lake
The thirsty fish she taught,
And with her skill she bought my life,
Oh dearer than we thought !
But here lass,
My dear lass,
Is the heart that you bought !
And oh princess, and oh princess,
Take back your marriage fee,
Oh make you bold with gems and gold,
With all our treasure's key :

Gift of a king your wedding ring,
So mine it shall not be :
For you, lass,
My true lass,
Are the one lass for me !

[Mary speaks straight at the audience.]

Mary. This has been bitter
That now is sweet :
That now is sweeter
Than buds in April,
Than hives of honey,
Than fields of bean,
Than all the hedges
Of Strand-on-the-Green.

Time will not hasten
His limping feet
To spoil the tasting
Of a thing so sweet !

CURTAIN

ON BOARD THE "GOLDEN
HIND," 1578

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By LOUIS N. PARKER

PERSONS

(in the order in which they appear or speak).

DIEGO, *a young Maroon, non-speaking.*

CAPTAIN WYNTER.

MR. CAUBE.

REV. FRANCIS FLETCHER.

CAPTAIN CHESTER.

MR. VICARY.

CAPTAIN THOMAS.

MR. CHARLES.

FRANCIS DRAKE.

TOM MOONE.

BRIGHT, }
BREWER, } *sailors.*
COOKE, }

GREGORY.

THOMAS DOUGHTY.

This episode, taken from the same author's play, *Drake*, is historical. It is based on the account of an eye-witness, the Rev. Francis Fletcher, who was present as Drake's chaplain. The scene has been specially revised by the author for this edition, to fit it for independent performance.

Drake was first produced at His Majesty's Theatre, London, under the management of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, on September 3, 1912.

ON BOARD THE "GOLDEN HIND," 1578

SCENE.—*The Admiral's quarters on board the "Pelican," seen diagonally. The back, being the side of the ship, slopes slightly inward. It is interrupted by a semicircular bay or turret, projecting outward, which, as well as the flat part, is pierced with practically continuous large square port-holes glazed with small panes, the upper being of stained glass with heraldic devices. The stern, R., slopes sharply outward and is all glazed. There is a door opening to a gallery with a richly carved and gilded handrail, which runs round the stern of the ship. In the centre of the partition on the left, which is perpendicular, is a broad staircase, leading up to the deck, and curtained off; on each side of this is a small door; that in front leads to the galley, that at the back to the Admiral's bedroom. The thickness of the oaken sides of the ship can be seen through the port-holes, but within the room is panelled in rare woods, and there are hangings of Flemish tapestry where possible. The floor is covered with handsome rugs; the beams of the ceiling, slightly curved, are carved, and the boards they support are painted with heraldic devices, among which a Golden Hind "trippant" is conspicuous. Candelabra hang from the beams and are fixed to the walls. In the centre of the room is an oblong black oak table covered with silver dishes of fruit, silver plates, Venetian flagons*

and Venetian goblets. At the head of the table, R., is a richly carved chair, with a high leather back on which the Golden Hind is stamped. In one corner of the room is a terrestrial globe. Instruments of navigation and charts are lying about. There is a service table at the back. The stern, R., is raised one step. The whole effect is one of sober splendour. Beyond the port-holes the sea shimmers, and in the near distance the coast is seen.

The disposition of the stage may be modified according to circumstances, providing the entrances are in the right places. The indications R. and L. are taken from the actors', not the audience's, point of view.

When the curtain rises four musicians [theorbo, viol, viola-d'amore, and viola da gamba] are playing in one corner of the cabin, R. Drake's chair is empty. Fletcher is at the foot of the table; Wynter on the right of Drake's chair; Chester on its left; Thomas next to Chester; Vicary next to Thomas; Charles on Fletcher's left; Caube next to Charles. They are drinking and laughing. Diego is serving wine.

Wynter. Why did the Captain-General leave the table?

Caube [with a laugh]. Drake grows daily more moody.

Wynter [warningly]. Now, Mr. Caube——!

Caube. Well, Captain Wynter, am I not i' the right?

Fletcher [half rising to look towards the balcony]. He seems lost in a day-dream.

Chester. Can you see him, parson?

Fletcher. Ay, Captain Chester; he's looking seaward, and his brow's clouded.

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Vicary [*laughing*]. Small wonder! I warrant he's musing on the rope he'll hang by if ever we reach England again.

Thomas. For shame, Mr. Vicary!

Charles. Ho! no such righteous anger, Captain Thomas! Your Drake is too high-handed, and will land himself in trouble. Hath he not clapped Thomas and John Doughty, his superior officers, in prison?

Chester [*hotly*]. Mr. Charles, Mr. Charles, you know very well 'twas the only way to curb their mutinous talk.

Wynter [*similarly*]. And, as for superior officers, the Captain-General hath none.

Caube. What! a sailor superior to soldiers?

Wynter. On this expedition.

Charles. Ho! this expedition! To encompass the world! As if that could be done!

Thomas [*violently*]. Drake'll do it.

Vicary. Not Drake nor another. We're doomed men. How are we to win through these hellish straits?

Chester. Where the Portugee went we can.

Caube. Magellan had but one ship. Drake hath four lame ducks to nurse.

Wynter. I know not by what right you and Mr. Vicary and Mr. Charles—landsmen—offer an opinion.

Caube. We are sent by my Lord Burleigh to see that your hare-brained corsair waste not her Grace's ships, nor the lives of her mariners.

Vicary. Nor doth not offend Spain, nor break not the laws.

Wynter. Shall I tell you what that sounds like to me? It sounds unpleasantly like spying.

Caube,	} [simultaneously leaping to their feet]	{	Unsay that !
Vicary,			Do you call us spies?
Charles,			Take it back !

[Uproar.]

[Drake comes slowly from R. The uproar subsides ; all sit except Caube and Vicary. Drake takes in the situation.]

Vicary [to give himself a countenance, lifts his glass]. Mr. Caube, I drink to you.

Caube [similarly]. I—I thank you, Mr. Vicary.

[They bow to each other, drink, and sit down.]

Drake [with an ironical smile]. I rejoice to see I was mistaken. I thought your voices were raised in anger.

[He sits in his great chair.]

Wynter [grimly]. Only the old croaking, sir.

Drake. Because I have laid the Doughtys by the heels ?

Caube [hotly]. Ay, then ! What authority have you over them ? When was it known that English soldiers served under a sailor ?

Drake [calmly]. It was never hitherto known. Until this voyage, English sailors and English ships have been at the bidding of landsmen. [He brings his fist down on the table.] That is folly ! For a soldier on board ship is no better than a sailor on horseback. [With a laugh] He is worse ; for he is very seasick. [With great emphasis] Wherefore, never again will I serve under a soldier, and he who setteth himself against that—whosoever he be—must abide the consequence.

Vicary [angrily]. And that is why the Doughtys, who are soldiers—

Drake [sternly]. Enough ! [After a short pause, in his ordinary tones] I have more urgent matters to impart to you.

[*He rises. At a signal from him Diego beckons to the musicians, and they go out by the staircase.*]

Drake [*standing*]. Gentlemen, we are nearing the worst of our voyage.

Caube [*rather impudently*]. Lord save us! As if there'd been any best!

Drake [*taking no notice beyond a rapid glance*]. St. Julian's Bay, where we now lie, is the threshold of Magellan's Straits.

Thomas. 'Tis the devil's own land.

Vicary. 'Tis accurst for Magellan's cruelty. For here he murdered one of his captains, hanged another, and a third he marooned.

Drake [*sternly*]. They had mutinied. By the Lord, Mr. Vicary, I would have done the same! [*Silence.*] But I was saying. In the face of coming dangers our little fleet must be made handier. I shall break up Tom Moone's ship, the *Christopher*. But then we shall have nothing to remind us of our well-wisher, Mr. Christopher Hatton.

Wynter [*bitterly*]. Oh, ay! We shall have his friends, the Doughtys!

Vicary [*hotly*]. What have you against the Doughtys?

Drake [*motioning silence*]. Wherefore, in Mr. Hatton's honour, I propose to re-name this ship—the *Pelican*—the *Golden Hind*. Thus, Mr. Wynter's *Elizabeth* shall carry the Queen's name [*with his own meaning*], the name we love; Mr. Thomas's *Marigold* shall remind us of English meadows; and the *Golden Hind* [*pointing to the device on the ceiling*] shall bear Mr. Hatton's cognizance into new waters. My masters, drink with me: Good

luck, fair winds, and smooth seas to the *Golden Hind*!

All [but Vicary] rise. The Golden Hind!—Mr. Drake!

Drake [surprised]. Mr. Vicary——?

Vicary. I cannot drink with you, Mr. Drake. [*Amazement.*] This pretended honour to Mr. Hatton is mere mockery while you keep his friends the Doughtys in prison.

Drake [bringing his fist down on the table]. Silence! [*Coldly*] Mr. Vicary, if you cannot stand with me, you cannot sit with me.

Charles [hotly]. If Mr. Vicary goes, I go with him!

Caube. And I!

Fletcher. Peace, gentlemen! Peace!

Vicary [going]. And I make bold to tell you that every soldier and every gentleman in the fleet thinks with me. And so I wish you a good digestion!

[Vicary, Charles, and Caube swagger up the stairs: Drake leaves his seat and walks to and fro.]

Thomas. How long will you suffer this, Mr. Drake? From the moment we lost sight of the Lizard, the Doughtys have stirred up this mutinous spirit.

Wynter. We cannot go forward while Thomas Doughty is with us. If you loosen him he breeds mischief, if you bind him his friends breed trouble.

Chester. He aims at your life, sir! He aims at your life!

Wynter. Bring him to trial, and be convinced!

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[Enter Tom Moone, down the companion, with papers. Drake meets him.]

Tom. Mr. Thomas Doughty, Admiral.

Drake [with a frown]. What now?

Tom. Mr. Gregory reports he is raising mutiny among his men.

Drake. God's patience!

Tom [offering the papers]. These were found on him; showing he had stirred up the officers to kill you.

Drake. Let me see! [After a glance at them he throws them on the table, and sinks despondently on a chair.] And I loved him!

Wynter, Thomas, and Chester [together]. Make an end on 't! Bring him to trial! Short shrift!

Drake [rising abruptly]. Masters, summon your officers and men. Diego, beat the assembly. Mr. Wynter, send Thomas Doughty guarded.

Wynter. And John?

Drake. One is enough.

[Exeunt Fletcher, Wynter, Thomas, Chester, and Diego, up the companion.]

Tom. The Lord be praised! You be come to your senses at last, Admiral!

Drake. God give me strength to do the right.

[Exit into his cabin.]

Tom [calling at the galley door]. Brewer! Bright! [They enter.] Lift thicky table on to platform [indicating R.]. Put big chair behind 'un; a chair o' both sides.

[The men do as they are told, and remove the plates, dishes, and glasses to the service table.]

Bright. Do look like assizes to Tavistock.

Tom. That's what 'tis. Doughty's coming to trial at last.

Brewer. By Gor! 'Twere time thicky warlock was laid by the heels! He'd a sunk the whole fleet.

Bright. Be sure! Why, he called fog and storms out o' his cap-case, so a did.

Brewer. Said a cud conjure wi' any man. Said a cud poison a man so's a wudden die, not for a twelvemonth.

Bright. Purty thing for a man to carry about in 's belly!

[*Enter Vicary, Charles, Caube, Gregory, tumultuously down the companion. All the following is spoken almost simultaneously.*]

Vicary. He hath no lawful power!

Charles. What commission hath he?

Gregory. I say he's in the right!

[*Enter Wynter, Thomas, Chester, Fletcher, similarly.*]

Wynter. We shall be rid of a traitor.

Thomas. High time!

[*Enter mariners. Among them Cooke.*]

Brewer [*shouting to them as they enter*]. A trial! Thomas Doughty's on trial!

Cooke. Should be t'other way round.

Brewer [*to him*]. Shall I knock thy lubberly girt head off thee?

[*Enter more sailors, until the cabin is a seething mass of gesticulating, shouting men.*]

Cooke [*shouting*]. Shall we stand by and see this? Mr. Vicary, take the lead!

Vicary. Not I, Cooke! I'm but a private venturer. Charles!

Shouts. Charles! Charles!

Warlock, Wizard.

Girl, Great.

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Wynter [to Thomas]. This begins to look black !
Thomas. Hold your hanger loose.

Shouts. Down with Drake !

Tom [furious]. What traitor cried " Down with Drake " ?

Caube [shouting]. Doughty, here !

[Doughty's friends collect round Charles and Caube.]

Fletcher. Madmen ! Hold your peace !

Thomas. Drake, here !

[Drake's friends collect round the captains.

Weapons are drawn. Uproar. Enter Drake.

Sudden hush, with threatening murmurs.

Drake goes calmly to his seat behind the table on the dais.]

Drake. Captain Thomas, on my left. You shall be Assessor. Mr. Gregory, you shall act as Provost Marshal. Mr. Wynter, is the accused on board ?

Wynter. Yes, Admiral.

Drake. Then, Mr. Gregory, fetch him.

[Exit Gregory.]

[The murmurs increase. They threaten to burst into shouts. Drake raises his hand. Silence.]

Drake. My masters, I see by your faces you know what is toward, and like it not. [Murmurs.] Neither do I. But I am not here to pleasure you or myself, but to do justice. [Burst of protest. Drake unhooks his sword and lays it on the table before him.] I lay my sword on the table. Now whosoever raises his hand against me commits murder upon a weaponless man, and will hang accordingly. [Hush of admiration. Murmurs.]

Hanger, A short curved sword.

Tom. By Gor ! That's fine !

[Enter Thomas Doughty, guarded, with Gregory preceding him. He is received with murmurs of sympathy. Charles shakes his hand. He bears himself haughtily.]

Thomas. Silence ! The Court is opened.

Drake [when all is quiet]. Thomas Doughty, ever since my first acquaintance with you, I have used you as my other self and as my inmost friend. Yet you have still sought to discredit me, thwarting my will, to the great peril of this voyage. You have even [touching the papers], in your jealous ambition, aimed at my life. Therefore I have brought you to trial.

Doughty [lightly]. Why, Lord General, you have no power or commission. [Assenting murmurs.]

Drake [coldly]. I warrant you, my commission is good enough.

Vicary. I protest ! Show your commission ! Show it !

Cries. Hear him ! Show it !

Drake [turning on him fiercely]. I have nought to do with crafty lawyers. [Touching the sword] Here is my commission. Thomas Doughty saw the Queen's Majesty honour me with this sword in my garden, and heard her say : " He which striketh at thee, Drake, striketh at us ! " Hath any man a better commission ? [Silence. To Doughty] With a heavy heart I do indict you, Thomas Doughty. You came into this venture with a traitorous intent. You have stolen our common treasure ; you have striven to corrupt my friends ; you tempted some to piracy ; and now you are lying in wait, like a base assassin, to take my life.

Cries. There is no proof! Bring proof!

Drake [*holding up one of the papers*]. Can you deny this writing? Here, under your own hand, you plan to murder me! For the rest, Chester—Gregory—have I spoken truth?

Chester and Gregory. Ay—less than the truth.

Drake. But there is graver matter, even, than my murder! High treason against the Sovereign Majesty of the Queen! [*Commotion.*] Call Edward Bright.

Gregory [*calling*]. Edward Bright!

Bright [*thrusting his way through the crowd*]. Here.

[*Gregory in dumb show puts him to the oath, and makes him kiss the Book.*]

Murmurs. A common sailor! Shall gentlemen submit to ruffraff?

Drake. Gentlemen shall submit to the truth. [*To Bright*] Say what thou knowest.

Bright. The night afore us sailed, I heard 'n say this was a maraudin' for piracy an' murder; and the Court and the Council and Mr. Hatton had been bought to wink at it—yea, and the Queen's Majesty herself!

[*Shock of surprise. Then murmurs increasing to shouts.*]

Cries. What!—The Queen bought!—The Queen a pirate! He never said it!—'Tis a lie!

[*Uproar.*]

Thomas. Silence!

Drake [*to Doughty*]. What do you answer?

Doughty. I never said it—or, if I did—I was beside myself with anger. A man knows not what he says—

Drake [*sternly*]. There is more! There is

treason against us all ! [*Curiosity among the crowd.*] My masters, Her Majesty gave me special commandment that of all men Lord Burghley must be kept in ignorance of our true errand, by reason of his fear of Spain. For if he gat wind on't, and we failed, every man here would surely hang.

Vicary [*impudently*]. Lord Burghley never did know !

Drake. Edward Bright, to whom did Thomas Doughty say what you have reported ?

Bright. To my Lord Burghley. [*Sensation.*]

Cries. Lord Burghley !—Then Doughty's a traitor !

Drake [*to Doughty*]. Again—how do you answer ?

Doughty. I—I—I refuse to answer.

Drake. You gave him a full plot of the voyage.
[*Doughty remains silent.*]

Drake. And Burghley sent you with us to hinder our enterprise and to report our deeds.

Doughty [*at bay*]. Yes, then ! For he feared your rashness ! [*Sensation.*]

Drake. His own mouth hath confessed his treachery. [*A short pause. Then with emphasis*] Now, my masters, will your mutinies and discords cease ? What ! Here be we, a little band of Englishmen bent on a great undertaking, the like of which was never seen, and we fling our glory away for jealousies, and our country's honour for personal hate ! Henceforth I will have the gentleman haul with the mariner, and the mariner with the gentleman, and if any refuse, let them sail home ! [*Pause.*] Now, considering my past love for Thomas Doughty, and that I impeach him of

aiming at my life, I cannot be his judge. It is for you to say whether he be innocent or guilty. If guilty, his punishment is death. Provost Marshal, lead the accused away. [*Doughty is led away in silence.*] For me, I will await your finding, and abide by it.

[*He goes out to the balcony behind him.*]

Thomas. Make short work on't.

Wynter. He hath confessed treason against the Queen, the Captain-General, his own master—Mr. Hatton—us all, and England, by disclosing our venture to Burghley. He hath been amongst us as Burghley's spy, and now hath betrayed Burghley himself. For me he is guilty and worthy of death.

Thomas. They that in their conscience think Thomas Doughty worthy of death, hold up their right hands.

[*All but Charles, Caube, and Cooke do so.*]

Thomas. To the contrary? [*No one stirs.*]
Summon the Captain-General.

[*Tom opens the door of the balcony. Re-enter Drake.*]

Charles. Do you condemn him, Vicary?

Vicary [*with a shrug of indifference*]. I think of my own head.

Drake. Bring the accused.

[*Thomas Doughty is brought in.*]

Drake. Mr. Wynter, how say you? Guilty? Or not guilty?

Wynter. Guilty.

Drake. Thomas Doughty, God knows I desire nothing better than to save your life, if I may with safety to the voyage. Wherefore I give you the choice: will you be set on shore, or will you be

conveyed to England, to be tried before the Lords of Her Majesty's Council? If you refuse these, you must suffer death, here, and now.

Doughty. Good Captain, for this I humbly thank you. I will not be left here among the native devils. I will not be sent to England. The shame of the return would be worse than death. I beseech you only to grant me the death of a gentleman.

Drake. This is the heaviest hour of my life. My masters, leave me private with my friend. Master Fletcher, attend us, to make our peace with God.

[As the officers and men go out, many shake Doughty by the hand.]

Doughty. My good masters all, pray for me, I beseech you.

[Preceded by Fletcher, he and Drake go out by the Admiral's door. Charles, Caube, Vicary, and Tom Moone remain.]

Charles. Well! God knows what they'll say of this day's work in England!

Vicary. They'll say nought. Neither will we, if you trust me. Too many of the great are in this matter, and we should burn our tongues.

Caube. But—his brother—John Doughty?

Vicary. If you love him, bid him hold his peace.

[They go out. Tom remains. Re-enter Drake, Doughty, and Fletcher. The last wrings Doughty's hand and goes up the companion-way, weeping.]

Drake *[quietly, to Tom]*. The stirrup-cup.

[Tom fills a great goblet with red wine, and hands it to Doughty.]

Doughty. Francis, I am very near the threshold.

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God hath witnessed our reconciliation. I pray
God to strengthen thy hand for England. [*Takes
the cup in both hands.*] And I drink to thee in all
love and reverence.

[He drinks, and hands the cup to Drake.]

Drake. I drink to the memory of happy days.
I drink to thee—a friend's God-speed.

*[He drinks, and hands the cup to Tom, who hurls
it through the open port-hole into the sea.
Roll of muffled drum on deck. Drake and
Doughty clasp hands. Enter, down the com-
panion-way, Gregory, with two guards with
drawn swords.]*

Doughty [to them]. I am ready, friends. [*To
Drake*] Farewell!

*[They embrace. Then Doughty goes out erect and
smiling. Drake falls on his knees in prayer.
Tom stands with his back to Drake, motion-
less, looking out to sea. Roll of drum.]*

CURTAIN

THE STOLEN PRINCE
A PLAYLET IN THE CHINESE FASHION
BY DAN TOTTEROH

CHARACTERS

LONG FO, *the little son of the royal cook.*

WING LEE, *his little sister.*

THE ROYAL NURSE.

HI TEE, *a poor but honest fisherman.*

LI MO, *his wife.*

JOY, *the little prince who was stolen.*

LEE MEE, *the duck.*

TWO SOLDIERS OF THE ROYAL COURT.

THE EXECUTIONER.

THE CHORUS.

THE PROPERTY MAN.

THE ORCHESTRA.

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THE STOLEN PRINCE

There is no stage setting except for a back-drop of curtains and two black chairs, centre. A lacquered box for the Property Man stands in the upper left corner. On the extreme right, separated from the players by a railing, is the orchestra, composed of three or more children dressed as Chinamen. They have no leader and they play without notes. Any instruments may be used, but there must be a gong. The music must be shrill and squeaky, and, to our ears, discordant. Combs, covered with tissue-paper, give a very good effect.

A gong is struck by the gong-bearer, and the Chorus enters. He is dressed in a long Mandarin coat, and wears a head-dress of feathers and beads. He walks very proudly to the centre of the stage and bows. The gong is struck again, and the Chorus raises his hand.

*Chorus. I am the Chorus, and I am here to tell you all about the play that my honourable actors are about to act upon this stage. They are all waiting behind the curtains with their make-up on, and they are very anxious to begin, so I shall be brief. [The orchestra plays a few notes, stopped by the Chorus raising his hand.] The name of our play is *The Stolen Prince*. It is a sad story at first, but do not weep too hard, because it has a happy ending.*

[He claps his hands together. The Property Man,

Seven Modern Plays

a funny fellow in a black coat and trousers, and a long cue (pigtail), enters and walks down stage, standing beside the Chorus.]

Chorus. This is the Property Man. Bow! [*He strikes the Property Man on the top of the head with his fan, and the Property Man bows.*] He will change the scenery and will hand the properties to the actors when they have need of them. He will take especial charge of Lee Mee, the duck. [*The Property Man cries, "Quack! quack!" and the Chorus strikes him again on the head with his fan.*] Silence! It is not time for that! Are all your properties ready? [*The Property Man nods his head.*] The first scene of our play takes place in the garden of the Emperor Lang Moo, in the Middle Flower Kingdom, a thousand and one years ago. [*The Gong-Bearer strikes the gong.*] It is springtime, and the blossoms are on the peach trees. It is a very important time in the household of the Emperor Lang Moo, because a child is about to be born unto him, and he prays it will be a son. [*To the Property Man*] Where is the blossoming peach tree?

[*The Property Man, who has been dreaming, starts and blinks, then shuffles up to the property box. He takes out a branch of imitation peach blossoms, and crossing to the two chairs, he stands behind them holding the branch over them. Now and then he becomes tired of holding the branch in one hand, and he carelessly shifts it to the other.*]

Chorus. Long Fo and Wing Lee, a little sister and a little brother, children of the chief cook in the royal household, come under the peach tree to play together.

[*The Chorus bows and steps to the left, where he stands throughout the play. There is music as Long Fo and Wing Lee enter.*]

Long Fo. Will you help me fly my kite, Wing Lee?

[*At the word kite, the Property Man drops the peach branch and goes to the box, where he finds a paper kite on a short string. He gives it to Long Fo, then takes up the peach branch again.*]

Wing Lee [*sitting down on one of the chairs*]. There is not enough wind, Long Fo. Let us sit here beneath the branches of the peach tree and wait for news about the baby who is coming to-day.

Long Fo. I do hope it will be a boy.

Wing Lee. Yes. If it is a girl the Emperor will have her killed at once. Poor little thing.

Long Fo. Why are you so sorry for her? It is the law to kill girl babies because they are worth so little.

Wing Lee. You say that because you are a boy, but I am very sorry for her.

Long Fo [*with contempt*]. You are a weak, weeping girl. I am a big strong man and I am going to fly my kite.

Wing Lee. You cannot fly your kite, because there isn't any wind.

Long Fo [*sitting down*]. Then I shall wait patiently until the wind shakes the branches of the peach tree.

[*The Gong-Bearer strikes the gong three times rapidly.*]

Wing Lee [*jumping up*]. What is that?

Long Fo. The new baby has come to the Emperor's palace.

Wing Lee. Oh, I tremble with excitement !

Long Fo. I feel sure it is a boy.

Wing Lee. And I feel sure it is a girl.

[There is music.]

[Enter the Royal Nurse.]

Long Fo. Nurse ! Nurse ! Tell me ! Is it a boy ?

Wing Lee. It is a girl, is it not, nurse ?

Nurse. It is both, my children !

Wing Lee. Both ?

Long Fo. How could that be ?

Nurse. It is twins, my children. A boy and a girl.

[The gong is struck. The Nurse and the two children bow. They go out. The Property Man takes the branch back to the corner and sits down on the box to rest.]

Chorus [bowing]. The next scene of our illustrious play takes place in the same garden. Three days have passed. The nurse is walking in the royal garden with the royal twins. The day is warm and full of the perfume of peach blossoms.

[The Property Man returns with the peach branch and stands behind the chairs. The Nurse enters carrying two dolls, one on each arm. One doll has a string of jade around its neck. That is the boy. The other doll is dressed in white and is the girl. The Nurse sits on one of the chairs and sings a little song to the twins.]

Nurse :

Go to sleep—Go to sleep—The wind is in the crooked tree ;

[The Property Man waves the peach branch back and forth.]

And it sings a song to you.
In the pool the goldfish three
Are sleeping too.

Go to sleep—Go to sleep—Go to sleep.

Go to sleep—Go to sleep—the moon is in the purple sky ;
And it smiles a smile at you.

By the pool the dragon-fly
Is sleeping too.

Go to sleep—Go to sleep—Go to sleep.

Nurse. Ah, my pretty babies, I love you both,
but one of you must leave me. [*To the girl doll*]
To-morrow you must die because you are a little
girl.

[*The Property Man hands her an embroidered silk
handkerchief, and she wipes her eyes, first one
and then the other.*]

Nurse [*holding up the doll with the string of jade
around its neck*]. Ah, little one, you are the chosen
of the gods because you were born a little boy.
You will spend your happy childhood playing by
the fish pond in the royal gardens. You will hear
the Emperor's golden parrots sing, and you will
hear the sacred scarlet fish telling secrets to the
sacred dragon-fly. When you become a man you
will become the Emperor of this great and mighty
Middle Flower Kingdom. Bright is your shining
star. [*Holding up the girl doll*] Ah, dark is your
star, little one. It is almost set. To-morrow, at
the hour of seven gongs, you die.

[*She wipes her eyes again. The gong is heard and
there is music.*]

Nurse [*looking off to the left*]. By the great green
catfish, what do I see ? A robber in the garden
stealing cabbages as plain as can be ! I'll run and
scare him away !

[*She places the two dolls on the chairs and runs*

off, waving her hands in the air. There is music. Long Fo and Wing Lee enter.]

Wing Lee. Here they are. The nurse has left them alone. Now is our chance.

Long Fo. I do not approve of this, Wing Lee. If we are found out we will both have our heads cut off.

Wing Lee. You promised to help me if I gave you my gold ball.

Long Fo. Oh, I'll help you all right. I never go back on my word, but I don't see what you want to save a girl for. They're so useless.

Wing Lee. Quick! Don't talk any more. The nurse is coming back. Which is the girl?

Long Fo [*lifting up the doll with the jade beads*]. This one, of course. She has jade beads around her neck.

Wing Lee. Give her to me. Now let's run to the river.

[They run off to the right. The Nurse returns and goes to the chairs. She starts back in surprise. She cannot believe her eyes—looks again—looks all about her—beats her breast.]

Nurse. Oh! oh! oh! The Prince has been stolen! Oh! oh! oh! I will have my head cut off for this! Oh! oh! oh! I must run away and hide myself in the mountains where they will never find me. Oh! oh! oh!

[She runs off right, crying. The orchestra makes a terrible din.]

Chorus [*bowing and raising his hand for silence*]. Our scene changes now. The action of our play moves from the garden of the Emperor Lang Moo to the green banks of the river Chang Hi. The Property Man will show you the river.

[*The Property Man puts the peach branch back into the box and takes out a piece of blue cloth. He unrolls it on the floor. He walks up and down on it, pulling up the legs of his trousers to show you that the river is wet. Then he goes back to his box and sits down on it. He goes to sleep. There is music. Long Fo and Wing Lee enter, running very fast and looking over their shoulders. Wing Lee carries the doll with the jade necklace. She almost runs on to the blue cloth.*]

Long Fo. Be careful! Do not go too near the river, Wing Lee. You will fall in and be drowned!

Wing Lee. Where is the tub?

Long Fo [*glancing back at the Property Man, who is still asleep*]. Yes, where is the tub?

[*The Property Man snores. Long Fo and Wing Lee look helplessly at the Chorus.*]

Chorus [*calling to the Property Man*]. The tub! The tub!

[*The Property Man answers with another snore.*]

Chorus [*to the audience*]. Excuse him, my good friends, for he is very stupid. We only keep him because we get him cheap.

[*He claps his hands loudly. The Property Man jumps up as if he has been stuck with a pin. He looks about, bewildered.*]

Chorus [*severely*]. The tub!

[*The Property Man takes a small wooden tub from the box and places it on the edge of the blue cloth. Then he goes back to his seat on the box.*]

Wing Lee. Ah, there is the tub. We will put the little girl in the tub. The tub will float down the great river, and some kind person will see it

and will give the poor little girl a home. [*She kisses the doll and puts it in the tub.*] Good-bye, little girl. When I get back to the palace, I shall burn a stick of incense to the gods for your safe voyage down the great river. Ah, now it is in the current. There it goes!

[*The Property Man shuffles over and pulls the tub slowly down to the other end of the blue cloth. Wing Lee and Long Fo wave their handkerchiefs.*]

Long Fo. Now it has turned a bend in the river. It is out of sight. Let us go back to the palace, Wing Lee. I want to fly my kite.

Wing Lee. There is not enough wind to fly your kite, Long Fo.

Long Fo. Oh, you always say that. Come on!

Wing Lee [*looking sadly down the river*]. There are many things can happen to her. A storm may rise and sink the tub. The terrible dragon-fish may see her and swallow her alive. Poor little girl, I fear for her.

[*She wipes her eyes with her handkerchief.*]

Long Fo. Do not cry any more. You will get your eyes all red and then they will begin asking questions at the palace. Come along! Come along!

[*He takes her hand and they go out. There is music.*]

Chorus. And now we follow the wooden tub on its long journey down the great river of Chang Hi. It sails all that night and all the next day, and stops, at last, before the house-boat of Hi Tee, a poor but honest fisherman.

[*He signals to the Property Man, who fetches a stick with a white piece of cloth tacked to it*

to represent a sail. He sets it above the two chairs. Then he returns to the box and takes out the duck, Lee Mee, a stuffed duck with a big yellow bill, and places it in the centre of the blue cloth. He stands back with arms folded as music and the gong are heard, and Hi Tee enters, followed by his wife, Li Mo. They bow and sit side by side on the chairs. Hi Tee rows the boat with imaginary oars.]

Hi Tee. I am that poor but honest fisherman named Hi Tee. This lady beside me is my wife, Li Mo. That [*pointing to the duck*] is our little duck, Lee Mee. He is a trained duck, and the fish he catches with his big bill he gives to us. We are very happy, but we long for a child. Do we not, Li Mo?

Li Mo. That is all we need to make us *completely* happy.

Hi Tee. All day long we sail and sail down the great river Chang Hi, and little Lee Mee swims merrily behind us, catching us fishes as we go. See, the wind is shaking the sails. [*The Property Man shakes the stick with the white cloth.*] Faster and faster now we go! The wind is so kind I shall not have to row any more to-day. I'll just sit still and watch the scenery go by.

[He stops rowing with the imaginary oars. There is music.]

Hi Tee. But, merciful catfish, what do I see? A tub floating by just as plain as can be!

Li Mo. So it is! A tub—with a baby in it!

Hi Tee. I'll jump into the water and save the child. A short way down the stream the dreadful rapids start. The tub will be upset and the baby will be drowned.

Seven Modern Plays

Li Mo. Oh, save the child, *Hi Tee* !

[Hi Tee jumps from the chairs on to the blue cloth, and making swimming motions with his arms, he picks up the tub and brings it back to the chairs.]

Li Mo. Give the poor little baby to me, I shall take care of it and bring it up as my own child.

[She takes the doll and holds it in her arms.]

Hi Tee *[looking at it]*. It is a baby of high degree. It wears a beautiful chain of jade about its neck.

Li Mo. The gods have answered our prayers.

Hi Tee. Lee Mee, our faithful little duck, we have another mouth for you to feed. Now, three times a day, you must catch three extra fish to feed our baby here.

[The Property Man gives an answering "Quack ! quack !" and shakes the sail.]

Li Mo. Here we go ! Here we go ! Floating down the water. We thank the gods for this little child—be it son or daughter !

[The Property Man quack-quacks again. Hi Tee and Li Mo rise, bow and go out, right. The Property Man puts the wooden tub back into the box. The gong crashes. The Property Man sits on his box and yawns. The Chorus comes down and raises his hand.]

Chorus. The first act of our illustrious play is now over. You will excuse my actors while they are served a drink of tea to refresh themselves for the remainder of the performance ? It is not easy work being actors, and they are tired.

[He bows and goes out to the left. The curtain is not pulled. The Orchestra spends its time tuning up, and then the actress who has played the Nurse enters with a tray of tea in

The Stolen Prince

III

little Chinese bowls and serves tea to the Orchestra. They drink, and return the bowls to the tray. The Nurse goes to serve tea to the Property Man, but finds him asleep; so, shrugging her shoulders, she leaves, drinking his bowl of tea herself. The gong is sounded. The Chorus re-enters, and takes the centre of the stage. He bows.]

Chorus. Now that my actors have refreshed themselves we will proceed with our play. Nine years have passed away. We are once more on the river Chang Hi looking at the fishing boat of Hi Tee and his loving wife, Li Mo.

[Hi Tee and Li Mo enter and bow. Hi Tee is wearing a grey cotton beard, the strings of which are tied around his ears.]

Chorus. As you can see by Hi Tee's beard, he is not as young as he used to be. His wife, Li Mo, is not as young as she used to be either, but she keeps her hair black by putting fish grease on it.

[Hi Tee and Li Mo take their places on the chairs.]

Chorus. And now you will see the hero of our play, the little Prince who was stolen. He does not know he is a Prince, and you who are sharing the secret must not tell him or you will spoil him, and he will become unhappy longing for something he cannot have. His foster parents have named him Joy, which is a very good name for such a bright and laughing boy.

[There is music. Joy runs in and bows. He wears the same chain of jade about his neck. It looks very strange with the rest of his coarse, brown fishing costume. He turns to the chairs and waves to Hi Tee and Li Mo.]

Seven Modern Plays

They beckon him to come to them. He runs over to the chairs and sits between them.]

Hi Tee. Where have you been all day, my little Joy?

Joy. I have been digging mud-turtles with my friend Kee Hee, but we did not find any. Then we looked for fish with our nets but we could not find any fish either. I am hungry now, dear mother.

Li Mo [*shaking her head sadly*]. Alas, my poor boy, I am hungry too, and so is your poor father, but there are no fish in the great river.

Joy. Why are there no fish in the great river?

Hi Tee. Because, my son, the gods are angry. They have tied strings to all the fishes' tails, and are holding them prisoners in the tall mountains where the river begins.

Li Mo. If they do not untie the strings and let the fish float down to us very soon, we will all die.

Joy. I will climb up the tall mountains to the place where the river begins and untie the fishes' tails. I am not afraid, mother.

Li Mo. The gods would kill you, my little son, and then what would I do without you?

Joy. Cannot Lee Mee, our faithful little duck, find any fish either?

Li Mo. Can you find us any fish, Lee Mee?

[They wait for a "Quack! quack!" from the Property Man, but he is still asleep. The Chorus turns and sees him sleeping. He crosses to him with great dignity, and taps him on the head with his fan. The Property Man leaps up, blinking.]

Chorus. You will be discharged after the play is over. You have not given us a "Quack!"

Property Man [staring stupidly]. Quack ! quack !

Hi Tee. What does our little duck say ?

Property Man. Quack ! quack ! quack ! quack !

Li Mo. He says he will search every river and every pond and every lake the whole world over until he finds a fish for us to eat.

Joy. I will go with him !

Hi Tee. No ! You must stay with us. Go, my good Lee Mee, and bring a fishie back to poor Hi Tee.

[*The Property Man shuffles forward and picks up the duck and tucks it under his arm. He shuffles off with it, giving a solemn, "Quack ! quack !"*]

Li Mo. If there is a fish left in the river, the lake or the pond, Lee Mee will find it for us. He is the most faithful duck in the whole Middle Flower Kingdom.

Joy. I love Lee Mee ! [There is music.]

Chorus. An hour passes by and Lee Mee returns.

[*The Property Man enters with the duck. He has put into the beak of Lee Mee a fish carved out of wood and painted a bright scarlet. He seats Lee Mee down close to the chairs, then returns to his box.*]

Hi Tee. Look ! look ! Lee Mee has found a fish for us !

Li Mo. Oh, good Lee Mee !

Joy. I have never seen such a beautiful fish before. It is as red as blood.

Hi Tee. Where did you get it, Lee Mee ?

Property Man. Quack ! quack !

Li Mo. He says he will not tell.

Joy. Let us eat it at once. I am very hungry !

[Hi Tee reaches down and takes up the fish.]

Hi Tee. You may have the tail, Li Mo. I will have the head ; and our son, the little Joy, may have the middle because it is the sweetest and the fattest. Give me my knife.

[The Property Man takes a long wooden knife with curved blade from the box and gives it to Hi Tee. Hi Tee puts the fish on the edge of the chair and raises the knife over his head. The gong and loud music are heard. Two Soldiers enter, carrying tall bamboo poles. They point at the scarlet fish and rush at Hi Tee.]

First Soldier. You are my prisoner !

Hi Tee. What have I done ?

First Soldier. You have stolen the Emperor's sacred scarlet fish from the royal fish pond ! To-morrow, you and your family shall die !

Li Mo. Oh, Lee Mee, why did you do it ?

Property Man *[mournfully]*. Quack ! quack !

First Soldier. Come along. *[He picks up the fish. To the Second Soldier]* Bring the rest of them.

[He starts off with Hi Tee. The Second Soldier follows with Li Mo and Joy. As they are about to go out, Joy brushes aside the bamboo pole of the Second Soldier and rushes back to Lee Mee, the duck. He tucks it under his arm.]

Joy. I would never leave you, Lee Mee.

Property Man. Quack ! quack !

[Joy rushes back to the Second Soldier and they all depart. The gong and music are heard.]

Chorus. And now we are back once more to the

garden of the Emperor Lang Moo. It is the next morning. [*The Property Man rolls up the blue cloth and takes the sail down from the chairs.*] It is autumn time when the leaves are falling. [*The Property Man takes a handful of imitation autumn leaves from the box and walks solemnly across the stage, scattering them left and right as he goes.*] It is the sad time of the year, and all the Emperor's Court is sad because the Emperor is very ill. Everybody knows that the great Lang Moo will soon die, and will pass above to the celestial kingdom. This is indeed sad in itself, but when an Emperor dies without a son to take his throne, then it is tragedy.

[*The gong is struck and the royal Nurse enters. She is walking with a cane, for she is now very old and bent.*]

Nurse [*looking about her*]. Ah, me—Ah, my—many years have passed since I was banished from this royal garden. I am a very wretched old woman. It is all my fault that the mighty Emperor is dying without a son. Ah, me—Ah, my—[*She sits on one of the chairs, and the Property Man gives her a large silk handkerchief to weep into. She weeps, first wiping one eye and then the other.*] I do not know what brought me back to-day, but something whispered in my ear and said that I should come. I left my mountain hiding-place, and walked for three long nights and three long days. I am now so very old that no one will ever recognize me, so I am safe.

[*Long Fo and Wing Lee enter. They are now grown up, and wear older head-dresses.*]

Wing Lee. It is here the execution will take place.

Long Fo. Yes, and the executioner should be here now. He is always on time.

Nurse. Pardon me, my children, but may I ask who is going to be executed?

Wing Lee. Oh, don't you know?

Nurse. No. I am a stranger here.

Wing Lee. Four heads are coming off this morning. The head of a fisherman, the head of his wife, the head of his son, and the head of a duck, Lee Mee.

Nurse. What have the poor souls done?

Wing Lee. They have——

Long Fo. Let me tell her, Wing Lee. You are only a woman, and you will get the story mixed up. [*To the Nurse*] The little duck, Lee Mee, stole the Emperor's sacred scarlet fish from the royal fish pond, and brought it to the fisherman and his family for them to eat.

Nurse. But if the duck stole the fish, why should they execute the fisherman and his family too?

Long Fo. Because the duck belonged to the fisherman, and the fisherman should have taught him better manners. [*The gong is struck loudly.*]

Wing Lee. Oh, here comes the executioner!

[*The Executioner enters, walking very proudly.*

The Property Man hands him a wooden axe.

The Executioner stands to one side as the gong sounds. Hi Tee walks in very slowly with his head bent. Li Mo enters next; then Joy, carrying Lee Mee, the duck. They are followed by the two Soldiers. Hi Tee, Li Mo, and Joy form a straight line. The two Soldiers stand in front of them. The Property Man gives the First Soldier a scroll.]

First Soldier [reading from the scroll]. To-day, Hi Tee, fisherman on the river Chang Hi, his wife Li Mo, their son Joy, and the most evil, bad-mannered duck, Lee Mee [*the Property Man quacks sadly*], will all die under the axe of the royal executioner. [*The Executioner swings his axe.*] The first to die will be the little boy named Joy, so that his parents may have the extreme pleasure of seeing the axe fall upon his neck.

[*He motions to the Executioner, who steps forward.*

Joy kisses his father and his mother good-bye, and then kisses Lee Mee, the duck, handing it to Hi Tee. Then he steps bravely forward. He sinks to his knees and bows his head. The chain of jade is plainly seen around his neck. The Executioner raises his axe to strike.]

Wing Lee [to *Long Fo*]. I'm sure I've seen that chain of jade somewhere before.

First Soldier. Wait, executioner! I will remove this chain of jade. It is too beautiful to be cut by the executioner's sword. I will keep it for my wife. [*He takes the chain from Joy's neck.*]

Nurse [*jumping up*]. Oh, stay a moment! Where did he get that chain of jade?

First Soldier. Who are you, old woman?

Nurse. You do not recognize me, for I am so very old, but I am Sing Lo, the royal nurse who long ago was banished from the Court because the little Prince was stolen while in my care. Do you remember?

Wing Lee [*suddenly beginning to weep*]. Oh! oh! oh!

First Soldier. What is the matter with you?

Long Fo. She is not feeling well, sir.

Nurse [to Joy]. Where did you get that chain of jade?

Joy. It has always been around my neck as long as I can remember.

Nurse [to Hi Tee]. Is this your son?

Hi Tee. Y-yes.

Nurse. Your true son?

Li Mo [breaking down]. He is not our true son, I must confess. We do not know who he is. We found him in a wooden tub floating down the river when he was only a tiny baby.

Wing Lee. Oh! oh! oh!

Nurse. He is the stolen prince!

First Soldier. What?

Wing Lee. It's true.

First Soldier. What do you know about it, Wing Lee?

Wing Lee. I was the one who stole him.

Nurse. You?

Wing Lee. Yes, when I was a little child. The nurse had left the twins beneath the peach tree. They were going to kill the little girl, so I thought I would steal her away. By mistake I stole the little Prince. I sent him down the river in a wooden tub with that chain of jade around his neck.

Joy [jumping up]. What are you all talking about? Aren't you ever going to cut off my head? I'm tired waiting.

Nurse [taking him in her arms]. We are not going to cut off your head. Instead, we are going to put a crown on it. You are the royal son of the mighty Emperor Lang Moo, who now is dying in his royal bed. The throne of the Middle Flower Kingdom will soon be yours.

First Soldier. I will run and tell the Emperor.

Second Soldier. And so will I! [*They run out.*]

Long Fo [*to Wing Lee*]. What did you say anything for? Now *we* will be beheaded.

Nurse. Oh no, you won't. The Emperor will be so glad to get his son back that he will smile to the end of his days.

Joy. Is it really true I am the Prince? Mother, is it really true?

Li Mo. Yes, my little Joy. [*She weeps.*]

Joy. Why do you weep, mother?

Li Mo. Because you will become the Emperor and I shall never see you again.

Joy. Oh yes, you will, mother. You will always be next to my heart. You and father and good Lee Mee will always be my dearest dears.

Property Man. Quack! quack!

[*The First and Second Soldiers return.*]

First Soldier. Little Prince, the Emperor awaits you in the royal bed-chamber. Will his Royal Highness come?

Joy. May I bring my family along too?

First Soldier. Of course, your Highness.

Joy [*taking Li Mo's hand*]. Come along, mother. You and I will go in together. Hi Tee, you and Lee Mee follow close behind.

[*Music and the gong are heard, as in procession*

Joy and Li Mo, followed by Hi Tee carrying Lee Mee, go out. The two Soldiers close in at the last.]

Long Fo [*to the Executioner*]. Why do you pull such a long face, executioner? Are you angry because you couldn't use your axe?

Executioner [*growling*]. Burrrr!

[*He shoulders his axe and stalks off.*]

Nurse. Let us tiptoe down the royal hall and peek through the royal keyhole into the royal bed-chamber. I would like to see the Emperor greet his little son.

[There is music. With fingers on lips and stepping very high on tiptoes, they start off in line, led by the Nurse. The Property Man starts to follow.]

Chorus. Stop!

[The Property Man stops. The others go out.]

Chorus. You cannot peek through the royal keyhole because you are only the Property Man.

Property Man *[hanging his head]*. Quack! quack!

Chorus *[stepping forward and bowing]*. My good and patient friends, our play is over. For your kind attention I bow, and bow, and bow.

[He bows three times. The Property Man bows three times. Chorus turns and sees him.]

Chorus *[snapping open his fan with great dignity]*. You are discharged!

[He sweeps off to the left. The Property Man shrugs his shoulders and goes out to the right.]

[The curtain is pulled back, showing tableau of all the characters grouped around Joy, who is seated on one of the black chairs with a crown on his head. In his arms he holds Lee Mee, the duck. Li Mo stands next to him, and on the other side, Hi Tee.]

CURTAIN

THE GRAND CHAM'S DIAMOND

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By ALLAN MONKHOUSE

CHARACTERS

MRS. PERKINS.
MR. PERKINS.
MISS PERKINS.
A MAN IN BLACK.
ALBERT WATKINS.

This play was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on September 21, 1918, by Mr. John Drinkwater, with the following cast :

MRS. PERKINS	.	.	.	.	.	Cathleen Orford.
MR. PERKINS.	.	.	.	.	.	Reginald Gatty.
MISS PERKINS	.	.	.	.	.	Sidney Leon.
A MAN IN BLACK .	.	.	.	.	.	Noel Shammon.
ALBERT WATKINS	.	.	.	.	.	J. Adrian Byrne.

THE GRAND CHAM'S DIAMOND

SCENE.—*A sitting-room in a small house in a London suburb. The window is in the wall to the L. of the spectator, and the door in the R. half of the back wall. The furniture is ordinary. On the chimney-piece, to the R. of the spectator, is a clock. The room is lit by electric light. It is some time after the evening meal. Mr. Perkins is reading a newspaper, Mrs. Perkins is darning a sock, and Miss Perkins is engaged upon a jigsaw puzzle.*

Mrs. Perkins. What I mean t' say is that it's not much fun for us.

Mr. Perkins. All right, Ma.

Miss Perkins [*engaged on her puzzle*]. Bother!

Mrs. Perkins. It makes a long evenin' of it. Same every night. We 'ave our tea and then we just set down till it's time to go to bed. It's not fair.

Mr. Perkins. Same for all of us.

Mrs. Perkins. That it's not.

Mr. Perkins. Why isn't it?

Mrs. Perkins. Do y' or do y' not go out o' this 'ouse every mornin' and spend the day out?

Mr. Perkins. It'd be a poor job for you if I didn't.

Mrs. Perkins. I don't say anythin' about that. I don't interfere.

Mr. Perkins. 'Ow could y' interfere?

Miss Perkins. Bother !

Mrs. Perkins. Don't interrup' like that when me and your pa's talkin', Polly.

Miss Perkins. My name isn't Polly.

Mr. Perkins. What is it ?

Miss Perkins. It's Marie.

Mr. Perkins. Well, I'm blowed !

Mrs. Perkins. An' why shouldn't she 'ave a bit of a change ? She's tired of bein' Polly.

Miss Perkins. I do think we might have a little more change.

Mr. Perkins. Don't you start.

Miss Perkins. We might have gone out to the pictures to-night, as mother said.

Mr. Perkins. Your young man might 'ave come and found you out.

Miss Perkins. You know he's engaged in the evenings.

Mr. Perkins. Yes, and what at ?

Miss Perkins. Never mind !

Mrs. Perkins. I do think, Polly, that he ought to be a bit more open with you. What *does* he do ?

Mr. Perkins. Ay ; what does Albert Watkins do ?

Miss Perkins. Never you mind !

Mrs. Perkins. 'E's never told 'er.

Mr. Perkins. I 'ope it's nothin' to be ashamed of.

Miss Perkins. P'raps I know more than you think.

Mrs. Perkins. 'As 'e said ?

Miss Perkins. It's confidential.

Mr. Perkins. Oh, I know that tale !

Mrs. Perkins. Well, Polly's got 'er young man,

and you've got your business an' out all day seein' people. What 'ave I got?

Mr. Perkins. Well, what should y' 'ave? What does any woman 'ave? I dunno what you're botherin' about. Y' 'ad a week at Margate this year.

Mrs. Perkins [*derisively*]. 'Ome from 'ome!

Mr. Perkins. A good woman ought to like 'er 'ome.

Mrs. Perkins. I never said I didn't like it.

Mr. Perkins. Well——

Mrs. Perkins. 'Ome's a place to come back to.

Miss Perkins. Mother's romantic. That's what she is.

Mrs. Perkins. What *is* that, Polly? It's a word I never rightly——

Mr. Perkins. Romantic! At 'er age!

Mrs. Perkins. You know what it is, do y'?

Mr. Perkins. It's penny dreadfuls, and the pictures, and gassin' about love and the deep blue sea.

Mrs. Perkins. Well, y' might do worse.

Mr. Perkins. Whatever's come over 'er?

Mrs. Perkins. I've always thought I should like to travel.

Miss Perkins [*at her puzzle*]. I think there's a bit missing.

Mrs. Perkins. Eh? A bit missin'? That's the way with me; there's always bin a bit missin'.

Mr. Perkins. I dunno why y're startin' like this now. Y've 'ad all these years to settle down in. What's come over yer?

Mrs. Perkins. Eh! Don't ask me. I think 'er Albert's comin' about 'as unsettled me.

Miss Perkins. Albert!

Mrs. Perkins. Well, I see 'im an' you, and I think what might 'a' been.

Mr. Perkins. What's that?

Mrs. Perkins. Well, I was young onct.

Mr. Perkins. But y're not now.

Mrs. Perkins. You've no call to throw it in m' teeth.

Mr. Perkins. Teeth indeed!

Mrs. Perkins. Don't be insultin', Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Perkins. I wasn't bein'.

Mrs. Perkins. Yes, y' was.

Miss Perkins. I don't see why Albert should unsettle you.

Mrs. Perkins. If I was you I'd want to know 'ow 'e spends 'is evenings.

Miss Perkins. It's no business of yours, Ma.

Mr. Perkins. It'll be some business of mine. I think it's about time Albert spoke to me.

Miss Perkins. Spoke to you?

Mr. Perkins. Placed 'is position an' prospects before me.

Miss Perkins. Well, I believe he's a confidential agent.

Mrs. Perkins. A what!

Mr. Perkins. What sort of a agent?

Miss Perkins. It's confidential—or financial, p'raps.

Mr. Perkins. He's kiddin' yer.

Mrs. Perkins. Do they work at night?

Miss Perkins. I've always understood that Rothschilds and people like that did this business at parties—on the quiet.

Mr. Perkins. Bosh!

Miss Perkins. Oh, very well, Pa.

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[*Miss Perkins settles to her puzzle. Mrs. Perkins darns stolidly. Mr. Perkins returns to the paper. A short pause.*]

Mrs. Perkins. Well, it's too late for the movies now.

Miss Perkins. Ah! that's it.

[*She finds the missing bit.*]

Mrs. Perkins. What's in the paper, Pa?

Mr. Perkins. There's a Cabinet crisis.

Mrs. Perkins. Isn't there anythin' interestin'?

Mr. Perkins. 'Ere's a child stole a shillin', an' swallowed it t' escape detection.

Mrs. Perkins. Poor thing!

Mr. Perkins. 'Ere! Is this more in your line? Great Jewel Robbery! The Grand Cham's Diamond missing.

Mrs. Perkins. Eh! What's that?

Miss Perkins. Who is the Grand Cham?

Mr. Perkins. 'E's—one o' them Eastern potentates. 'E's been stayin' at the Majestic Hotel. The diamond was taken out of the settin' and a walnut substituted.

Mrs. Perkins. A walnut! It must be a whopper.

Miss Perkins. Why did they substitute a walnut?

Mr. Perkins. You must substitute somethin'.

Miss Perkins. Why?

Mr. Perkins. I don't know. They always do. The brightest treasure of the East. Not the slightest trace. Supposed Asiatic gang. Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown have been summoned, and a telegram dispatched to Mossier Lecock.

Mrs. Perkins [*with satisfaction*]. Well, that's somethin' like.

Miss Perkins. What's it worth ?

Mr. Perkins. Eh ! I dunno. Thousands, thousands. They say it makes the Koh-i-noor take a back seat.

Mrs. Perkins. Reelly ?

Mr. Perkins. What 'ud you do, old lady, if I brought it 'ome for y'r birthday ?

Mrs. Perkins. Well, I'd wear it, I s'pose.

Miss Perkins. You'd never dare, Ma.

Mrs. Perkins. I would that.

Miss Perkins. But thieves 'd always be after it.

Mrs. Perkins. What 'd these thieves do with it when they've got it ?

Mr. Perkins. I s'pose they'd chop it up and sell it in bits.

Mrs. Perkins. What a shame !

Mr. Perkins. I dessay they're off to South America.

Mrs. Perkins. Why ?

Mr. Perkins. No extrydition.

Mrs. Perkins. What's that ? D' y' mean last 'dition extra ?

Miss Perkins. No, Ma. It means that thieves can't be turned out.

Mrs. Perkins. Why not ?

Mr. Perkins. It's like it used to be with slaves here. Once the South American flag's waved over 'em, they're all right.

Miss Perkins. It isn't all one country there, Pa.

Mr. Perkins. Well, I reckon they're much of a muchness.

Mrs. Perkins. An' could you sell it there ?

Mr. Perkins. Yes, they're great people for jewel'ry.

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Mrs. Perkins. Polly, you're doin' nothin'. Y' might as well be mendin' that blind.

Miss Perkins. Oh, bother!

Mrs. Perkins. It looks bad hangin' down like that.

Miss Perkins [going towards the window]. People 'll see in.

Mrs. Perkins. There's not many passin' at this time o' night.

Miss Perkins. It makes it so public. [She takes the blind from the lower part of the window and begins to mend it.] Where's the white thread, Ma?

Mrs. Perkins. Here y' are. Now, make a job of it.

[*Mr. Perkins* has returned to his paper, his daughter is more or less intent on her work, *Mrs. Perkins* darns and yawns. *Mr. Perkins* snores gently.]

Mrs. Perkins. Might as well all be asleep.

Miss Perkins. Listen, Ma!

Mrs. Perkins. Somebody runnin'. Seem in an 'urry.

[Something crashes through the window and falls with broken glass upon the floor.]

Miss Perkins. Good gracious!

Mrs. Perkins. Mercy on us!

Mr. Perkins [waking up]. Fire! Where is it?

Mrs. Perkins. Nonsense, Pa! It's them boys. Out arter 'em.

Mr. Perkins. What! Where?

Miss Perkins. No. Don't go. Don't leave us. It can't be boys.

Mr. Perkins [seeing the broken window]. This is very careless, Polly.

Miss Perkins. It wasn't me. It's a stone, I think.

Mrs. Perkins. They're far enough now. Where is it?

Miss Perkins. I'm all of a tremble.

Mrs. Perkins. You ought to 'ave run right out, Pa, and you might 'ave caught 'em. I never did see such a thing.

Mr. Perkins. It's an outrage, this is. Did y' see anybody?

Mrs. Perkins. We 'eard somebody runnin'.

Miss Perkins. I thought I 'eard somebody passing after that. Quietly like. Runnin' very light.

Mr. Perkins. Nonsense, Polly. Better put that blind up now.

Miss Perkins. You put it up.

Mr. Perkins. Do as I tell you.

Miss Perkins. I don't like.

Mrs. Perkins. 'Ere, 'ere. Give it me.

[*She puts it up, and peers out into the street.*]

Miss Perkins. Come away, Ma.

Mr. Perkins. Where's the stone?

[*They all look about the floor.*]

Miss Perkins. Here it is. Here's something.
[*She picks it up.*] Why, it's a lump of glass!

Mr. Perkins. Let's look!

Mrs. Perkins. Let me see. [*They crowd round.*]

Mr. Perkins. I say!

Miss Perkins. What is it? What is it?

Mrs. Perkins. Give it me, Polly. [*She grabs it.*]

Mr. Perkins. Hold it up to the light.

Miss Perkins. Why? What can it be?

Mrs. Perkins [*relinquishing it to her husband*].
Nonsense! Nonsense!

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[She goes back to her chair and begins to fumble with her darning. She is greatly agitated.]

Mr. Perkins. It's a rum thing, this is.

Miss Perkins. Eh! Isn't it beautiful?

Mr. Perkins. It might be a——

Miss Perkins. Diamond?

Mr. Perkins. Nonsense!

Mrs. Perkins *[rushing forward]*. Hide it!

[She seizes the diamond and looks about the room.]

Miss Perkins. Why! What d' y' mean, Ma?

Mrs. Perkins. It's it.

Mr. Perkins *[feebly]*. What's it?

Mrs. Perkins. You know.

Mr. Perkins. What—what—what rubbish! The idea!

Mrs. Perkins *[looking at it in her palm]*. It's the Grand Cham's dimond.

Mr. Perkins. Then it's dangerous.

Mrs. Perkins. Never mind that.

Miss Perkins. What shall we do?

[She begins to whimper.]

Mrs. Perkins. Stop that, Polly.

Mr. Perkins. P'raps we'd better look out for a policeman.

Mrs. Perkins. No.

Mr. Perkins. If it is it we're not safe.

Mrs. Perkins. I don't care.

Mr. Perkins. But what d' y' want to do?

Mrs. Perkins. Here! Let's put it inside the clock. *[She opens the back of the clock and crams it in.]* Now!

Mr. Perkins. What are y' up to, Ma?

Miss Perkins. I wish you'd throw it out in the street again.

Mrs. Perkins. No, no.

Mr. Perkins. But what are y' up to ?

Mrs. Perkins. It's come to us, this 'as. We'll stick to it if we can.

Mr. Perkins. But——

Miss Perkins. Oh, Ma !

Mrs. Perkins. They may not find the 'ouse again. They're all alike in this street.

Mr. Perkins. There's the broken window.

Mrs. Perkins. Let's 'ave the bits of glass out. Then it won't be noticed.

[She peers out into the street. Then she begins to pluck the fragments of broken glass from the window. She winces and licks her finger.]

Mr. Perkins. You've cut yourself now.

Mrs. Perkins. Never mind that. Polly, pick all the bits off the floor. Don't leave a trace.

[She licks her finger. Polly obeys.]

Mr. Perkins. Now, what's all this about ?

Miss Perkins *[on the floor].* I dunno what's come over 'er.

Mrs. Perkins. 'Ere, Polly, look alive. 'Ave y' got 'em all ?

Miss Perkins. All I can find.

Mrs. Perkins. Drat it ! A bit's fallen outside. Go out and pick it up, Pa. No ; p'raps better not.

Mr. Perkins. Look here ! What's y'r game ?

Mrs. Perkins. Give here ! *[She takes all the fragments together and puts them under the sofa cushion. She looks round the room, listens at the windows, and returns to her darning.]* If any one comes, mind we know nothin' about it.

Mr. Perkins. It depends 'oo comes, doesn't it ?

Mrs. Perkins. No.

Mr. Perkins. It might be the police.

Mrs. Perkins. Never mind the police.

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Mr. Perkins. Why! What d' y' mean? What do y' mean?

Mrs. Perkins. It's the chanct of a lifetime. We'll take it.

Miss Perkins. Oh, Ma!

Mr. Perkins. Look 'ere——

Mrs. Perkins. It's come to us. It might a' bin the answer to a prayer.

Mr. Perkins. Was it?

Mrs. Perkins. Not exactly, but I've been thinkin' a lot.

Mr. Perkins. More likely the devil.

Mrs. Perkins. There's no such thing. Y're talkin' nonsense.

Mr. Perkins. It's awful talk, this.

Miss Perkins. Why! What could you do with it?

Mrs. Perkins. Chop it up and sell it.

Mr. Perkins. Where?

Mrs. Perkins. In South America.

Mr. Perkins. Good 'eavens!

Miss Perkins. Ma, how can you?

Mr. Perkins. 'Ave y' took leave of y'r senses?

Mrs. Perkins. Yes, if y' like.

Mr. Perkins. Well, I've 'eard tell as women aren't honest like men, and now I know it.

Mrs. Perkins. 'Ow do I know you're honest?

Mr. Perkins. I've never took a thing in my life. I've a record, 'aven't I?

Mrs. Perkins. I dessay. I dunno. I won't give it up. I won't. I won't. So there!

Mr. Perkins. 'Ow can y' 'elp it?

Mrs. Perkins. I've sat there darnin' and mendin', waitin' and dozin' till I'm tired. I've never 'ad a go at anythin'. The chanct 'as come.

Miss Perkins. I did think you were honest, Ma.

Mrs. Perkins. Honest! It's ours.

Mr. Perkins. 'Ow can it be?

Mrs. Perkins. 'Oo's is it?

Mr. Perkins. Why! That Grand Cham's.

Mrs. Perkins. An' 'ow did 'e get it? 'E's a tyrant. 'E stole it off some nigger. Now it's come to me. It's mine. It's mine as much as any one's. It's come like a miracle.

Miss Perkins. But you can't keep it.

Mr. Perkins. Y'r ma amazes me.

Mrs. Perkins. First thing in the mornin' y'll get a list o' them ships sailin' for South America.

Miss Perkins. Oh, Ma! Ma!

Mr. Perkins. She's off 'er chump.

Mrs. Perkins. I'll go alone if y' like.

Mr. Perkins. It's dangerous. It's dangerous. There may be a revolver levelled at y' now.

Mrs. Perkins. I don't care.

Mr. Perkins. I never knew she was like this.

Miss Perkins. South America? Where?

Mrs. Perkins. Y' shall 'ave jewels and dresses no end, Polly.

Miss Perkins. Don't, Ma.

Mr. Perkins. South America! Like that chap Jabez Balfour.

Miss Perkins. He was brought back, wasn't he?

Mr. Perkins. I object to be put along of 'im, any'ow.

Mrs. Perkins. We'd manage better than that. Riches! Livin' at ease. Motors an' champagne. We've never 'ad a chanct!

Mr. Perkins. It can't be done. It's all nonsense. An' it's 'orrible to think of.

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Mrs. Perkins. Oh! It's a beautiful thing. I couldn't bear to break it up. We'll keep it. We'll look at it now and then. Every Sunday.

Mr. Perkins. Sunday!

Mrs. Perkins. I could go on settin' 'ere if I knew it was there all the time. I think I could be 'appy.

Miss Perkins. You'd never be safe.

Mrs. Perkins. Safe! I've bin too safe.

Mr. Perkins. Oh, missis! Oh, missis!

Miss Perkins. It's strange nobody's come.

Mrs. Perkins. Nobody's comin'. It's a gift.

Mr. Perkins. It may not be—what y' think.

Mrs. Perkins [*fiercely*]. It is.

Mr. Perkins. Then they'll be after us. Police—or worse.

Mrs. Perkins. Let 'em come.

[*There is a ring at the door-bell. They all stand tense.*]

Mr. Perkins. Now, there.

Miss Perkins. Oh, dear!

Mrs. Perkins. You'll not say a word. You'll do as I tell you. Mind that. We know nothing.

Miss Perkins. There's the window.

Mrs. Perkins. Leave that to me.

Mr. Perkins. Oh! But, I say——

Mrs. Perkins. Thomas Perkins, you'll rue it to your dyin' day if—— [*The ring again.*]

Mr. Perkins. Who's goin'?

Mrs. Perkins. I am. Remember!

[*She goes out.*]

Miss Perkins. What are we to do, Pa?

Mr. Perkins. Eh! I'm beat.

Miss Perkins. Shall we throw it out of the window?

Mr. Perkins. No, no. Best not. Humour her a bit. It may be nothin'.

Mrs. Perkins [outside]. No, you don't. 'Ere. I tell yer——

Stranger. Excuse me.

Mrs. Perkins. Pa, 'ere's a man forcin' 'is way——

Miss Perkins. Oh, dear!

Mr. Perkins. Dash it all! I say!

[*Mrs. Perkins and a dark Stranger, dressed in black, enter together. She is resisting his advance, but he presses on ruthlessly. As he enters she gives way and changes her tactics.*]

Mrs. Perkins. Well, I must say! Pushin' a lady about like that! What bis'ness 'ave y' 'ere?

Stranger. I've told you, madam.

Mrs. Perkins. A fine tale! Y'r boy an' 'is glass marble! Where is 'e? I tell yer we know nothin' about it. Do we, Pa?

[*Behind the Stranger, with a terrific frown, she shakes her fist at him.*]

Mr. Perkins [feebly blustering]. Now what's all this?

Miss Perkins. Oh, Ma!

Mrs. Perkins. Shut up!

Stranger. I'm sorry to intrude, sir, but I've lost something in your room.

Mrs. Perkins. What nonsense! 'Ow could yer?

Stranger. As I have told this lady, my little boy——

Mrs. Perkins. Where is 'e?

Stranger [to *Mr. Perkins*]. His favourite glass marble. He pretended to throw it. It slipped from his hand and, I am sorry to say, went through your window. I apologize, and shall be glad to

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pay. Please give me the marble at once. Where is it? I've no time to lose.

Mrs. Perkins. Where's the boy?

Stranger. He's just round the corner.

Mrs. Perkins. D' y' expect us to believe that tale?

Stranger [*with a flash of menace*]. You'd better. [*To Mr. Perkins*] Now, sir!

Mr. Perkins. It's a bit thick, y' know; I mean thin.

Stranger. It will have to do. No trifling. Come!

[*He is looking about the room, having cursorily glanced at the floor. He strides to the window and pulls down the blind.*]

Mrs. Perkins. None o' y'r liberties here. Get out!

Mr. Perkins. 'Ere, y' know! [*Aside to Mrs. Perkins*] Ma, I don't like it.

Stranger. The devil! Where's the glass?

Mrs. Perkins. What glass?

Stranger. The pane's gone. You see! I knew this was the house.

Mrs. Perkins. That's easy explained.

Miss Perkins. Oh, Ma! Tell him, and——

Mrs. Perkins. Of course I'll tell 'im. [*She menaces Miss Perkins surreptitiously.*] It's my daughter's new-fangled ideas of ventilation. She would 'ave it so. It's been that way a fortnight. No—let's see—to-day's Tuesday. Nigh on a month.

Stranger. Damnation! Where is it? Where's the diamond?

Mrs. Perkins [*with a shriek of exultation*]. The dimond!

Stranger. Yes, let me tell you then. Your lives are in danger. You have got the Grand Cham's diamond.

Mr. Perkins. 'Ow did it get 'ere?

Stranger. The thief was pursued. He threw it in.

Mr. Perkins [*querulously*]. Why did 'e throw it in 'ere?

Stranger. Don't be a fool.

Mrs. Perkins. An' 'oo are you?

Stranger. I am—the Grand Cham's representative.

Mrs. Perkins. Prove it.

Stranger. Enough of this.

[*He draws a revolver. Miss Perkins shrieks.*

Mr. Perkins recoils and edges away. Mrs. Perkins stands firm.]

Mr. Perkins. Ma! Ma!

Stranger [*rapping the butt of the revolver on the table*]. Where is it?

Mrs. Perkins. I'll tell yer.

Stranger. At once.

Mrs. Perkins. I've swallowed it. *the swallow*

Stranger [*greatly discomposed*]. What!

Mrs. Perkins. It went down as easy as a oyster.

Stranger. Swallowed it! You're joking!

Mrs. Perkins. No. I got the idea out of the evenin' paper. Where is it, Pa? 'Ere. "Child swallows Shillin'. Curious Case."

Stranger [*to the others*]. Is this true?

Miss Perkins. Oh, I don't know.

Mr. Perkins. Y' see, I was asleep.

Stranger. Asleep!

Mr. Perkins. Wasn't I, Mother?

Mrs. Perkins. 'E'd sleep through anythin'.

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Stranger. D'you mean to say——? Where is it?

Mrs. Perkins. I've just told yer.

Stranger. On your oath——

Mrs. Perkins. Oath! D' y' doubt the word of a lady?

Stranger. Then—d' you feel it—I mean—whereabouts is it now?

Mrs. Perkins. I don't think that's a question a gentleman 'd ask.

Stranger. Kites of hell! You'll have to be cut open.

Mrs. Perkins. Nay, I won't.

Stranger [*to himself*]. Cremation! Would it melt the diamond?

Mrs. Perkins. I won't be cremated. There! Y' 've got to get the deceased's consent. I'm goin' to be buried when my time comes.

Stranger [*pacing about in agitation, while Mrs. Perkins controls the others by nods and winks*]. What's to be done? An emetic?

Mrs. Perkins. You'd better go 'ome an' say it's lost.

Stranger. Unhappy woman! Do you understand that your life is a trifle, a pawn in the game?

Mrs. Perkins. Pawn! Yes, an' y' can't get it out without the ticket.

Stranger. It's impossible. It can't be. [*He turns on the others.*] The truth! Did she swallow it? If she did, she dies.

Miss Perkins. Oh, no, no. She didn't.

Mrs. Perkins. You silly!

Miss Perkins. Oh, Ma!

Mr. Perkins. Ma, Ma, what can we do?

Mrs. Perkins. Y' can 'old y'r tongues. Y're no 'elp at all.

Stranger. What folly this is! What can you do with it? That diamond means death to you. Death! Destruction! You haven't a chance of keeping it. You're mad. Your lives now are not worth a minute's purchase.

Miss Perkins. Give it up, Ma. I'll tell you where it is. It's——

Mrs. Perkins [*in a terrible voice*]. Stop!

Mr. Perkins. What can you do, Ma? Chuck it! Chuck it!

Mrs. Perkins. 'E don't bluff me. 'E's in a great 'urry. I believe 'e's the thief.

Stranger. Thousand devils! We're wasting time. [*He looks at the clock and then plucks out his watch.*] Your clock's slow. It's stopped. It was that time when I came in.

Miss Perkins. Tell him. Tell him.

Mr. Perkins. Oh, chuck it!

Stranger [*perceiving that he is getting "warm"*]. What stopped the clock?

Miss Perkins [*hysterically*]. Give it 'im.

Mrs. Perkins. Polly, I'm ashamed of yer.

[*A face appears at the window, but they do not see it.*]

Stranger. Is it there?

[*He makes for the clock, and Mrs. Perkins throws herself in front.*]

Mrs. Perkins. No, it's not; and y' shan't meddle with my furniture.

Stranger [*pointing the revolver at her*]. Move aside!

Mrs. Perkins. Move aside yerself.

Stranger [*hesitates, then turns the revolver on Miss Perkins*]. Is it there? Quick!

[*Miss Perkins shrieks, a hand with a revolver in it*

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is thrust through the empty pane, the revolver is fired, the Stranger drops his, stamps, curses, and wrings his hands. A man opens the window-sash and springs into the room.]

Miss Perkins. Albert!

Mrs. Perkins. What! It's Albert.

[The Stranger rushes to the switch and turns off the light. Darkness, shouting, and confusion. The light is turned on. The furniture is disarranged, the Stranger and the clock have gone, the others are distributed about the room, Mrs. Perkins sitting in the chair she first occupied.]

Albert. Who's got it?

Mr. Perkins. He's gone.

Miss Perkins. Oh! Albert!

Albert. Where's the diamond?

Mr. Perkins. It was in the clock.

Albert. The clock? Where is it?

Miss Perkins. Oh! Albert!

Mr. Perkins. 'E's taken it. 'E's got the clock.

Mrs. Perkins. Nay, 'e 'asn't.

[She produces the clock from under her petticoats.]

Mr. Perkins. Well, I'm blowed!

Miss Perkins. Oh, Ma!

Albert. What is it? Have you got it?

Mrs. Perkins. I've got it right enough. *[She carries the clock to the chimneypiece, opens it, and takes out the diamond.]* Will that gentleman come back?

Albert. No, he won't.

Mrs. Perkins. How d' y' know?

Albert. I know.

Mrs. Perkins. Polly, just put that blind back, will yer? I don't like bein' too public.

Miss Perkins. Oh ! I daren't.

Albert. Now, ma'am, give it to me.

Mrs. Perkins. Eh ?

Albert. Let's have it. Quick.

Mrs. Perkins. Where d' you come in, Albert ?

Albert. Come on. This'll be the making o' me.

Mrs. Perkins. O' me too, I 'ope. But 'adn't we all better be movin' ?

Miss Perkins. Where to, Ma ?

Mrs. Perkins. Out at the back door. Pack a few things in a bag.

Albert. What are y' up to ? Wha'd' y'r mean ?

Mrs. Perkins. Now, Albert, there's no time to make explanations. We're all in at this, aren't we ?

Albert. Well—in a way. But look here——

Mrs. Perkins. South America's the place, isn't it ? D' y' know anythin' o' the sailin's ? Or 'ad we better cross to France ? Better take the mid-night train somewhere.

Albert. Has she gone dotty ?

Mrs. Perkins. Y're all asleep. Come on, Polly. A few things in a bag. Now, Pa. Better put this light out p'raps. Is the front door shut ? Look at the time-table, Pa.

[*She is making for the door when Albert intercepts her.*]

Albert. Give me the diamond. I dunno what y're talkin' about.

Mrs. Perkins. Nay, I stick to this.

Albert. You can't ! What nonsense ! Give it here ! This job's the makin' o' me. Let's have it.

Mrs. Perkins. Nay, it's mine, an' I'll stick to it.

Albert. Yours ?

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Mrs. Perkins. Yes. Dimonds like this belongs to them as can get 'em. Nobody's honest with things like this. I got it an' y' shall all share. But it's mine. It's mine. Eh! It's a beauty. I'd stick to this if all the p'lice in London was after me.

Albert. Y'd do what?

Mrs. Perkins. Ay, an' Scotland Yard too.

Albert. Bah! I'm Scotland Yard.

Mrs. Perkins. What!

Miss Perkins. Oh! Albert!

Albert. Didn't y' know? Didn't y' guess? Didn't y' understand? What did y' take me for?

Mrs. Perkins. D'y mean to say——?

Albert. I mean t' say it's 'igh time I was on my way back with this diamond. The gang's all rounded up by this time.

Miss Perkins. The gang?

Mr. Perkins. That feller was one of 'em, then? Where is he?

Albert. He was copped when he left 'ere. Y' didn't know y'r 'ouse was surrounded.

Mrs. Perkins. But 'ow did the dimond come 'ere? 'Oo threw it in?

Albert. I did.

Miss Perkins. You!

Mr. Perkins. You did!

Albert. I did that.

Mr. Perkins. Why?

Albert. Becos they were after me. I was a dead man if I stuck to it then. I threw it in 'ere to gain time and knowin' the 'ouse.

Miss Perkins. Well, I never!

Albert. They're a desp'rate lot.

Mr. Perkins. It's all most unusual. Never since I've been an 'ouse'older 'ave I——

Miss Perkins. Oh, Albert! You might 'ave told me.

Albert. I 'ad my reasons.

Mrs. Perkins. Y're a detective, then?

Albert. I am that. So let's 'ave it. I tell yer I must be off.

Mrs. Perkins [*holding up the diamond, but away from him*]. Look at it, Albert!

Albert. I see it.

Mrs. Perkins. Can y' be honest? Look at it!

Albert. She's off 'er chump.

Mr. Perkins. She doesn't reelly mean it. I've borne a 'igh character all my life.

Mrs. Perkins [*passionately*]. It's *my* dimond.

Miss Perkins. I'm ashamed of my ma.

Mr. Perkins. My employers 'as always put the utmost confidence in me.

Albert. What's she up to? Now, ma'am, you'll just 'and that over or——

Mrs Perkins. Or?

Albert [*producing a whistle*]. I wouldn't 'andle yer myself.

Mrs. Perkins. That's it, is it?

Albert. That's it.

Mrs. Perkins. Then let it go the way it came.

[*She throws it through the window.*]

Mr. Perkins. 'Old on. There's another pane gone!

Albert. Oh, 'elp! [*He rushes out.*]

Miss Perkins. You'll ruin us, Ma.

Mrs. Perkins [*dusting one hand against the other*]. A good shuttance.

Miss Perkins [*at the window*]. Oh! I hope he'll

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find it. There he is, and a policeman's with him. They've got it, I think. Yes. Albert! Albert! I wish he'd look up. They're seeing if it's damaged. There! He's waved his hand.

Mrs. Perkins [*she has settled into her chair*]. Well, we've 'ad quite a busy evenin'.

Miss Perkins. I don't know what Albert'll think of you.

Mrs. Perkins. 'E's not going to marry me, thank 'eaven.

Mr. Perkins. D' y' want t' know what I think of yer?

Mrs. Perkins. Go on! Y've no 'mageration.

Miss Perkins. I never thought to be ashamed of my own mother.

Mr. Perkins. Wantin' in the very el'ments of morality. I wonder 'ow Sossiety'd get on if they was all like you.

Mrs. Perkins. Polly, put up that blind. It's a bit chilly with them broken panes.

Miss Perkins. Most unladylike as well.

[*They settle down into their chairs again. Mrs. Perkins takes up her darning, and Mr. Perkins the paper. After putting up the blind, Miss Perkins returns to her puzzle.*]

Mrs. Perkins. 'Ow much did y' say it was worth, Pa?

Mr. Perkins [*gruffly*]. Never mind.

Mrs. Perkins. Well, I 'ad my bit o' fun for onct.

CURTAIN

SAUL AND DAVID

A CHRONICLE-PLAY IN SEVEN SCENES

ARRANGED FROM THE AUTHORIZED VERSION
OF THE BIBLE BY MONA SWANN

CHARACTERS

CHORUS, or TWO NARRATORS.

JESSE, *David's father.*

ELIAB,
ABINADAB,
SHAMMAH,
NETHIAENEEL, } *elder sons of Jesse.*
RADDAI,
OZEM,

SAMUEL, *the prophet.*

DAVID, *Jesse's youngest son.*

AN ELDER.

SAUL, *king of Israel.*

FIRST SERVANT OF SAUL.

SECOND SERVANT OF SAUL.

JONATHAN, *Saul's son.*

ABNER, *captain of Saul's army.*

FIRST WARRIOR OF SAUL'S ARMY.

THE VOICE OF GOLIATH.

WOMEN DANCERS.

AHIMELECH THE HITTITE, } *captains of David's army.*
ABISHAI,

A SENTRY.

A FOLLOWER OF SAUL.

THE WOMAN OF EN-DOR.

A MESSENGER.

MEN AND WOMEN AT ZIKLAG.

Mute Characters : Elders, Servants, Warriors.

SCENES

I. The Anointing of David. II. In the Tent of Saul.
III. The Champion of Israel. IV. The Covenant of
Friendship. V. The Cave of En-ge-di. VI. The Woman
of En-dor. VII. The Lament of David.

Any one scene may be acted alone, or groups of two,
three, or four selected scenes may be given. Staging
can be very simple. See page 213.

SAUL AND DAVID

SCENE I

The Anointing of David.

CHORUS, or TWO NARRATORS.

JESSE, *father of David.*

ELIAB,

ABINADAB,

SHAMMAI,

NETHANEEL,

RADDAL,

OZEM,

SAMUEL, *the prophet.*

DAVID, *youngest son of Jesse.*

Elders, Serving-boy.

} *elder sons of Jesse.*

[The Chorus of children enter L. and R. in front of the front curtain. Where no Chorus is available, "First Narrator" and "Second Narrator" should be read for "First" and "Second Semi-Chorus," and "First" and "Second Group" throughout.]

The Chorus. Hear therefore, O ye kings, and understand; learn, ye that be judges of the ends of the earth.

For power is given you of the Lord, that ye may learn wisdom, and not fall away.

First Semi-Chorus. Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away: yea, she is easily seen of them that love her, and found of such as seek her

Second Semi-Chorus. For she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her, showeth herself favourably to them in the ways, and meeteth them in every thought.

First Semi-Chorus. For the very true beginning of her is the desire of discipline ; and the care of discipline is love ;

Second Semi-Chorus. And love is the keeping of her laws ; and the giving heed unto her laws is the assurance of incorruption ;

First and Second Semi-Chorus. And incorruption maketh us near unto God ; therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth a kingdom.

[*The line of the Chorus changes into two groups, L. and R.*]

First Group. Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. But when Samuel was old, then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came unto him, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old ; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations, that he may save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, the son of Kish, and Samuel made Saul king before the Lord.

Second Group. But Saul the king of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and Samuel the prophet mourned for Saul. And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing that I have rejected him from reigning over Israel ? Fill thy horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite : for I have provided me a king among his sons. And thou shalt anoint me him whom I name unto thee.

And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem.

[During the last sentence the leaders of the two groups have taken hold of the curtain and drawn it apart. The elders of Israel and Jesse and his sons are there ; the elders and Jesse are talking together ; the young men seem busied with hand-crafts, sawing, hammering, etc., as if at the doors of their tents. Samuel enters, followed by a serving-boy bearing the bowl and hyssop twigs of purification.]

The two groups of Chorus stand to the extreme R. and L. in front of the curtain.]

An Elder [to Samuel]. O Samuel, prophet of the Lord, comest thou peaceably ?

Samuel. Peaceably : I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord : sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.

[The elders and Jesse and his sons gather together.]

Samuel. Fear not : turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart : for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake. Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth : for consider how great things he hath done for you.

First Group. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons. *[They pass before him, one by one ; he sprinkles them with the water of purification.]* And it came to pass that he looked on Eliab.

Samuel. Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.

First Group. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him : for the

Lord seeth not as man seeth : for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

[*Samuel motions Eliab on. He goes angrily.*]

Jesse. Abinadab, pass thou before Samuel.

[*One by one the other five sons pass before Samuel ; he pauses before each, then motions him away.*]

Samuel. Neither has the Lord chosen this.

Jesse. Shammah, pass thou by.

Samuel. Neither has the Lord chosen this.

Jesse. Nethaneel . . . Raddai . . . Ozem . . .

Samuel. The Lord has not chosen these. Are here all thy sons ?

Jesse. There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep.

Samuel. Send and fetch him : for we will not sit down till he come hither.

Second Group. And he sent and brought him in.

[*Ozem goes to find him.*]

Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to.

[*Ozem enters, pushing David roughly before him.*]

David comes and stands before Saul.]

And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him : for this is he.

[*Samuel raises his arms in blessing.*]

Samuel. I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever : blessed is the people that know the joyful sound. For the Lord is our defence ; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. Thou spakest in vision, and saidst, I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant ; with my holy oil have I anointed him : with whom my hand shall be established : mine arm also shall strengthen him. His seed shall

endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen.

First Group. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren : and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.

[David has knelt wonderingly before Samuel, who has drawn the horn of oil from his girdle and anointed him. David raises his head.]

David. O God, my heart is fixed ; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

Awake, psaltery and harp : I myself will awake early.

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth :

That thy beloved may be delivered : save with thy right hand and answer me.

[He springs to his feet, and speaks as in prophecy.]

God hath spoken in his holiness ; Judah is my lawgiver ; over Philistia will I triumph.

Who will bring me into the strong city ? who will lead me into Edom ?

Wilt not thou, O God ? Through God we shall do valiantly.

Blessed be the Lord my strength : my goodness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer ; my shield, and he in whom I trust !

[The prophetic moment is passed ; David, the shepherd lad once more, salutes Samuel, and passes out the way he came. The leaders of the Chorus groups step forward and close the curtains ; the groups follow, and form a line once more in front of them.]

SCENE II

In the Tent of Saul.

CHORUS, or TWO NARRATORS.

SAUL, *king of Israel.*

DAVID.

TWO SERVANTS.

First Semi-Chorus. The Lord is my light and my salvation : whom shall I fear ?

Second Semi-Chorus. The Lord is the strength of my life : of whom shall I be afraid ?

First Semi-Chorus. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord.

Second Semi-Chorus. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion : in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me ; he hath set me upon a rock.

First and Second Semi-Chorus. Wait on the Lord : be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart : wait, I say, on the Lord.

[*The leaders open the curtains again, and the groups move to the sides as before. Saul is seated under a canopy held by four attendants; his two servants crouch at his feet.*]

First Group. But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him ; and he sat in his house with a javelin in his hand.

First Servant. Behold now, an evil spirit troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy

servants to seek out a man who is a cunning player on an harp : and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

Saul. Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me.

Second Servant. Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, one David, a shepherd lad, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.

Saul. Go unto Jesse and say, Send me David thy son, who keepeth the sheep.

[A servant goes. Saul sits brooding.]

Second Group. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. And David came to Saul.

[David has entered. He prostrates before Saul.]

Saul. Stand thou before me. *[He gazes at David.]* Lo, thou hast found favour in my sight. Take thou thy harp, and play with thine hand.

[David takes his harp and seems to play.]

David. The Lord is my shepherd : I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

[Saul has risen ; he lifts his javelin, and throws it at David ; it misses him. David continues unmoved.]

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for

thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

[Saul has relaxed, and sunk back upon his stool : he lifts his head, and looks at David in wonder.]

Saul. Whose son art thou, thou young man ?

David. I am David, the son of thy servant Jesse the Beth-lehemite.

Saul. Blessed be thou of the Lord, O David : for lo, I am refreshed and well, and the evil spirit is departed from me. Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

First and Second Groups. And Saul loved David greatly ; and he became his armour-bearer. But he went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep in Bethlehem.

[Saul has laid his hand on David's head in blessing. The group leaders close the curtains ; the Chorus re-forms the line before them.]

SCENE III

*The Champion of Israel.*SAUL, *king of Israel.*JONATHAN, *his son.*ABNER, *captain of the host.*ELIAB,
ABINADAB, } *elder sons of Jesse.*

SHAMMAI, }

DAVID.

THE VOICE OF GOLIATH.

Warriors, etc.

First Semi-Chorus. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.

Second Semi-Chorus. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

First Semi-Chorus. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall dwell in his holy place?

Second Semi-Chorus. He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully,

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of our salvation.

First and Second Semi-Chorus. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.

First Semi-Chorus. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Second Semi-Chorus. Who is this King of glory?

First Semi-Chorus. The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.

Second Semi-Chorus. Lift up your heads, O ye
gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ;
and the King of glory shall come in.

First Semi-Chorus. Who is this King of glory ?

First and Second Semi-Chorus. The Lord of
hosts, he is the King of glory.

*[The leaders stand ready to draw back the curtains ;
the groups move L. and R. before them.]*

First Group. Now the Philistines gathered together their armies, and Saul and the men of Israel set the battle in array against them. And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, and there was a valley between them. *[The curtains are drawn back. The stage is filled with warriors. The sons of Jesse are among them. Saul is seated on a stool (R. front) ; Abner and Jonathan are with him.]* And the three eldest sons of Jesse followed Saul to the battle.

Second Group. And David, his youngest son, kept his father's sheep ; and he rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took loaves and cheeses as Jesse had commanded him ; and he came to the trench as the host was going forth to fight.

First and Second Group. For Israel and the Philistines had set the battle in array, army against army.

Second Group. And David ran into the army, and came, and saluted his brethren.

[He has run in (L. front), found his brethren, and greeted them.]

Shanmah. Have ye seen this man that is come

up? Lo, there went a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height is six cubits and a span!

Abinadab. And he has a helmet of brass upon his head, and he is armed with a coat of mail . . .

Another Warrior. And the weight of the coat is five thousand shekels of brass . . .

Abinadab. And he has greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders . . .

Shammah. And the staff of his spear is like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weigheth six hundred shekels of iron; and one bearing a spear goeth before him . . .

Abinadab. Surely to defy Israel is he come up . . .

[*The voice of Goliath is suddenly heard (off-scene, L. back).*]

Voice of Goliath. Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and ye the servants of Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

[*The crowd, angry or fearful, has gathered below the platform; some now mount it to see the giant; David alone stands quietly apart, centre-front, and does not look towards the voice.*]

Cubit, 17.6 inches.

Span, 8.8 inches.

Shekel (weight), nearly half an ounce.

David [to a Warrior]. What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

First Warrior. Lo, it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

[His brother Eliab has suddenly seen David, and pushes through the crowd to him.]

Eliab. Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

David. What have I now done? Is there not a cause? for did I not bring loaves and cheeses as Jesse my father commanded me?

Second Group. And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul.

[Jonathan has heard David's words; he goes to tell Saul.]

Jonathan. Behold, the shepherd lad, David, whom thou hast made thine armour-bearer, came to the trench with loaves and cheeses, and to look how his brethren fared. And he spoke, saying, What shall be done unto the man that slayeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

*Free in Israel, Free from taxes and forced labour.
Naughtiness, Wickedness.*

Saul. Let the stripling stand before me.

[*Abner goes to David.*]

Abner. Come up after me. My lord the king would speak with thee.

[*David comes to Saul, and kneels before him.*]

David. O king, let no man's heart fail because of him ; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

Saul. Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him : for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

David. Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock : and I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth : and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him. And behold, therefore, the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.

Saul. Go, and the Lord be with thee.

Jonathan [*goes forward and takes his hands*]. Be strong, and of a good courage ; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed : for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

[*David makes obeisance, and goes towards the steps to the platform ; there he stoops to gather stones, while the choric groups speak.*]

Second Group. And David chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip ; and his sling was in his hand : and he drew near to the Philistine.

First Group. And the Philistine came on and

drew near unto David ; and the man that bare the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him ; for he was but a youth, and of a fair countenance.

[*David has mounted the platform, and stands facing L. Saul and his soldiers have drawn to the R.*]

Voice of Goliath. Am I a dog, that thou comest to me thus ? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

David. Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield : but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts ; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear.

Second Group. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slung it. . . .

[*The army of Israel has been waiting below the platform, watching in tense silence. Now they break into shouts of praise and thanksgiving, as David runs forward, following the stone that he slung.*]

Jonathan. Lo, he hath smitten the Philistine in the forehead !

Abner. Goliath hath fallen upon his face to the earth ! The battle is the Lord's, and he hath given him into our hands !

Saul. O men of Israel, arise, and pursue the Philistines, until ye come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron.

[*He leads the warriors out (L. platform). As they go, their voices are heard.*]

Saul. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good. . . .

All. For his mercy endureth for ever !

Abner. O give thanks unto the God of gods. . . .

All. For his mercy endureth for ever !

Jonathan. O give thanks unto the Lord of lords. . . .

All. For his mercy endureth for ever !

[*The voices fade into the distance ; the stage is emptied.*]

First and Second Groups. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone ; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

[*The leaders close the curtain as before.*]

SCENE IV

The Covenant of Friendship.

CHORUS, or TWO NARRATORS.

SAUL, *king of Israel.*

JONATHAN, *his son.*

DAVID.

ABNER, *captain of the host.*

A LITTLE LAD.

WOMEN DANCERS.

First Semi-Chorus. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say ;

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us :

Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul :

Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

Second Semi-Chorus. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.

Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

First and Second Semi-Chorus. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

[*The leaders draw back the curtains; the Chorus forms two groups as before.*]

[*The traverse curtain is partly drawn across the back platform, above the steps, to suggest the entrance to Saul's dwelling. There is the sound of cymbal and tambourine, and as the group speaks women enter, dancing. The light suggests sunset time.*]

First Group. It came to pass, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

[*The dancing women take their places to speak this psalm; it is accompanied with the tambourine, and at each "praise" there is a clash of cymbals and a change of posture.*]

Women. Praise ye the Lord!

Some Women. Praise God in his sanctuary. . . .

Others. Praise him in the firmament of his power!

Some. Praise him for his mighty acts! . . .

Others. Praise him according to his excellent greatness!

Some. Praise him with the sound of trumpet. . . .

Others. Praise him with the psaltery and harp!

Psaltery, A stringed instrument.

Some. Praise him with the timbrel and dance. . .

Others. Praise him with stringed instruments and organs !

Some. Praise him with the loud cymbals. . .

Others. Praise him with the high-sounding cymbals !

All. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord ! Praise ye the Lord !

[*Saul, Jonathan, and attendants have entered R. front. The women see them, and bow low before them.*]

Women. Saul hath slain his thousands, and David has slain his ten thousands. . .

Saul has slain his thousands, and David has slain his ten thousands. . .

Saul [*in great anger*]. Arise ; be gone.

[*The women disperse in terror, going off L. and R.*]

Saul [*to Jonathan*]. Behold, they have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands : and what can he have more but the kingdom ? Lo, when Abner hath brought him before me, I will smite him even to the wall with my javelin.

[*He lifts the javelin ; Jonathan seizes his hand.*]

Jonathan. Let not the king sin against his servant, against David ; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good ; for he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel : thou sawest it, and didst rejoice : wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause ?

Timbrel, A kind of drum.

Saul. As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain.

[*Saul passes through the traverse curtains to his dwelling ; Jonathan awaits David, while the stage gradually darkens into nightfall.*]

Jonathan. Lo, my soul is knit with the soul of David, and I love him as my own soul, and my life is bound up in his life. Lord, remember David : make the way straight before his face !

[*David enters with Abner.*]

Jonathan [*to Abner*]. Go thou in, and stand beside my father ; for the evil spirit is come upon him.

[*Abner goes into the dwelling-place.*]

Jonathan [*to David*]. O David, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee ; now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself.

David. What have I done ? what is mine iniquity ? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life ?

Jonathan. God forbid : thou shalt not die : behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me : and whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will do it for thee.

David. Behold, it is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat : but let me go, that I may hide myself. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Beth-lehem his city. If he say thus, It is well ; then thy servant shall have peace : but if he be wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him.

Jonathan. Lo, I will make a covenant with thee, O David : for I love thee as I love my own soul. [*He raises his hand.*] O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father, behold,

if there be good towards David, and I then send not to thee, and show thee; the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

David. O Jonathan, I do swear it. Let the Lord even require it at the hand of mine enemies.

Jonathan. Behold now, hide thyself; and in the morning come to this place, and remain by the stone that showeth the way. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a boy, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt, as the Lord liveth. But if I say, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee, go thy way: for the Lord hath sent thee away. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord is between thee and me for ever.

David. The Lord bless thee, O Jonathan; the Lord shall open to thee his good treasure, and shall bless all the work of thine hand.

[They embrace. David goes out L.; Jonathan watches him go, then enters the dwelling-place. Two attendants come out, and open wide the traverse curtains. Saul is seen, seated before

a table, with Abner beside him. The dwelling-place is lit as with torches. The main stage is dark.]

Saul [to Jonathan]. Wherefore cometh not David, the son of Jesse, to meat ?

Jonathan. David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Beth-lehem : and he said, Let me go, I pray thee : for our family hath a sacrifice in the city ; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there. Therefore he cometh not to the king's table.

Saul [rising from his stool in his wrath]. Thou son of the perverse and rebellious woman, do I not know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion ? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

Jonathan. Wherefore shall he be slain ? What hath he done ?

First Group. And Saul took a javelin to smite Jonathan : whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

[While the group speaks, Saul has taken his javelin as if to cast it at Jonathan. Abner stays his hand, and Jonathan departs from Saul as he came. He descends the steps and goes out L. The attendants close the traverse curtains once more.]

The light increases on the main stage, as with the coming of dawn.]

So Jonathan arose in fierce anger : for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

Second Group. And it came to pass in the morning that Jonathan went out into the field, and a little lad with him.

[*Jonathan re-enters L. with his bow, followed by the little lad.*]

Jonathan. Run, find out now the arrows which I shot. Is not the arrow beyond thee? Make speed, haste, stay not.

First Group. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not anything: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

Jonathan [*giving his bow to the lad*]. Go, carry them to the city. [*The lad goes.*]

Second Group. And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and he and Jonathan kissed one another, and wept one with another.

[*David comes from his hiding-place; he and Jonathan embrace.*]

Jonathan. Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever.

David. O Jonathan, my brother Jonathan. The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever.

[*He goes R. front. Jonathan watches his going. The leaders close the curtains, as before.*]

SCENE V

The Cave of En-gedi.

CHORUS, or TWO NARRATORS.

DAVID.

AHIMELECH THE HITTITE, } *captains under David.*
ABISHAI, }SAUL, *king of Israel.*ABNER, *captain of the host.*Captains under David; Servants and Warriors of
Saul.*First Semi-Chorus.* I will lift up mine eyes unto
the hills; from whence cometh my help?*Second Semi-Chorus.* My help cometh from the
Lord, which made heaven and earth.*First Semi-Chorus.* He will not suffer thy foot
to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not
slumber.*First and Second Semi-Chorus.* Behold, he
that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor
sleep.*Second Semi-Chorus.* The Lord is thy keeper. . . .*First Semi-Chorus.* The Lord is thy shade
upon thy right hand.*Second Semi-Chorus.* The sun shall not smite
thee by day. . . .*First Semi-Chorus.* Nor the moon by night.*Second Semi-Chorus.* The Lord shall preserve
thee from all evil. . . .*First Semi-Chorus.* He shall preserve thy
soul.*First and Second Semi-Chorus.* The Lord shall

preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

[The line forms into two groups as before ; the leaders stand ready to open the curtain.]

First Group. And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him : therefore he departed thence, and escaped, and dwelt in strongholds in En-gedi.

Second Group. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him ; and he became a captain over them.

[The leaders draw back the curtain. The scene is dim. The traverse curtains are almost open, and there is a sentry posted on the platform. David stands on the main stage with his captains about him. He raises his arms in prayer.]

David. Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me : for my soul trusteth in thee : yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

Ahimelech the Hittite. I will cry unto God most high ; unto God that performeth all things for me.

Abishai. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.

David. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. Awake up, my glory ; awake psaltery and harp : I myself will awake early.

Some of the Captains with David. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

All. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens :
let thy glory be above all the earth. . . .

[The Sentry cries out.]

Sentry. O David, Saul is come after us with three thousand men to seek us, and lo, he is upon the rocks of the wild goats, and he cometh to the sheep-cotes by the way.

David [to his captains]. Remain ye in the sides of the cave.

[David and his captains hide in the shadows.]

First Group. And Saul went into the cave, and his people round about him.

[Saul, Abner, and his men enter by the platform, the men set a bolster for Saul, and a cruse of water.]

A Follower of Saul. Doth not David hide himself in these strongholds? Now, therefore, O king, our part shall be to deliver him into thy hand.

Saul. Blessed be ye of the Lord ; for ye have compassion on me. Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there : and come ye again to me, and I will go with you. And it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out through all the thousands of Judah.

[They go. Saul lies on the ground, with a few of his followers around him. His spear is stuck upright in the earth at his head.]

First Group. And they arose, and went to seek David ; and behold, Saul lay sleeping within the cave, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster. And Abner, the captain of the host, lay beside him.

[When they are quietly asleep, David and his men emerge from the sides of the cave.]

Ahimelech. O David, behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Lo, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.

Abishai. Now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

David. Destroy him not : the Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against my master, the Lord's anointed. But, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

[Ahimelech takes the spear and Abishai the cruse, and they, with David, disappear in the shadows once more.]

Second Group. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster ; and no man saw it, neither awaked : because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them.

[The light increases at the entrance to the cave (platform).]

First Group. And when morning was come, Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. David also arose afterward, and went, and cried after Saul.

[Saul and his men have risen and gone forth. David follows them, and stands on the platform, looking after them, R.]

David [in a loud voice]. My lord the king !

Second Group. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

[Abner runs back ; Saul slowly follows.]

Abner. Who art thou that criest to the king ?

David [with bowed head, so that his face is hid

from Abner]. Art thou not a valiant man ? and who is like to thee in Israel ? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king ? For there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster.

[Ahimelech and Abishai appear behind David on either side ; one holds aloft the spear, and the other the cruse.]

Saul [amazed]. Is this thy voice, my son David ?

David. It is my voice, my lord, O king. *[Saul bows his face in his hands.]* Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant ? for what have I done ? and wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy heart. Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord delivered thee this day into mine hand in the cave : and some bade me kill thee : but I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord. Yet thou hunttest my soul to take it. The Lord therefore be judge, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

Saul. I have sinned . . . I have sinned. . . . Thou art more righteous than I : for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. Return, my son David ; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day : lo, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

David [kneeling before *Saul*]. Behold the king's spear ! *[He hands it to Abner.]* O my lord the king, he that ruleth over men must be just. And

he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

Saul [raising David from the ground]. Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt do great things, and also shalt still prevail.

First and Second Groups. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

[The leaders close the curtains as before, and the choric groups re-form.]

SCENE VI

The Woman of En-dor.

CHORUS, or TWO NARRATORS.

THE WOMAN OF EN-DOR.

SAUL.

VOICE OF SAMUEL.

SERVANTS OF SAUL.

First Semi-Chorus. O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Second Semi-Chorus. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

First Semi-Chorus. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

Second Semi-Chorus. If I ascend up into heaven,

thou art there : if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

First Semi-Chorus. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

Second Semi-Chorus. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me ; even the light shall be light about me.

First and Second Semi-Chorus. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee ; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

[The groups are formed again : the leaders stand ready to open the curtains.]

First Group. Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

Second Group. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem : and when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by prophets.

First Group. Then Saul said unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said unto him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor. And Saul disguised himself, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to En-dor by night.

[The leaders draw back the curtains. The stage is

*lit redly ; the traverse curtains are drawn.
The woman is crouched over a brazier,
muttering.]*

Woman. Lo, one cometh . . . one cometh . . .
a choice man and a goodly . . . there is not
among the people of Israel a goodlier person than
he. Yet the destroyer shall come upon him, and
a dreadful sound is in his ears : for he knoweth
that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.
The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his
candle shall be put out with him.

*[Saul and his followers enter L. front, with muffled
faces.]*

Saul. O woman of En-dor, I pray thee, divine
unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring him up
whom I shall name unto thee.

Woman. Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath
done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar
spirits, and the wizards, out of the land : where-
fore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause
me to die ?

Saul. O woman, as the Lord liveth, there shall
no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

*[The woman takes a powder of herbs, and holds it
ready to scatter upon the brazier.]*

Woman. Whom shall I bring up unto thee ?

Saul. Bring up Samuel. *[She scatters the herbs.]*

Woman *[crying out]*. Terrors are turned upon
me : they pursue my soul as the wind : they come
upon me as a wide breaking in of waters. . . . O
king, why hast thou deceived me ? for thou art
Saul !

Saul. Be not afraid : for what sawest thou ?

Woman. I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

Saul. What is their form ?

Woman. Lo, an old man cometh up ; and he is covered with a mantle.

[From the shadows behind the brazier appears the figure of Samuel : or it may be that he is only seen by Saul and the woman ; but when he speaks, his voice is heard by all.]

First and Second Groups. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped to the ground, and bowed himself.

[Saul and his followers prostrate before Samuel.]

Voice of Samuel. Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up ?

Saul. I am sore distressed ; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams : therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do.

Voice of Samuel. Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy ? And the Lord hath done, as he spake by me : for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David : because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines : and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me.

Saul. To David . . . even unto David hath he given it. . . . *[He falls on the ground.]*

First Group. Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel : and there was no strength in him.

[The woman goes to him and kneels beside him.]

Woman. O my lord the king, I see that thou art

sore troubled. Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee: and eat, that thou mayest have strength when thou goest on thy way.

Saul. Nay, I will not eat.

First Servant. O lord the king, I pray thee, arise, and eat: for thou hast taken no bread all the day, nor all the night.

Second Group. And the woman hasted, and brought unleavened bread before Saul, and before his servants: and they did eat.

[The woman ministers unto them. Saul stands apart, looking to the place where Samuel was.]

Saul. O Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and thy words. Now my days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. For I know well that David shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in his hand.

[He covers his face with his cloak. The leaders close the curtain.]

First and Second Groups. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

SCENE VII

The Lament of David.

CHORUS, or TWO NARRATORS.

DAVID.

A MESSENGER.

MEN AND WOMEN OF ISRAEL.

First Semi-Chorus. Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it :

Second Semi-Chorus. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

First and Second Semi-Chorus. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrow : for so he giveth his beloved sleep.*

[*The groups re-form ; as the leaders draw back the curtain, Group One speaks.*

The traverse curtains are open ; David is seated, R., before the platform.]

First Group. Now it came to pass, when David was returned, and had abode two days in Ziklag ; it came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head.

Second Group. And so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and made obeisance.

[*The messenger has run in and fallen to his knees before David.*]

* Eccles. ii. 1-7 may be substituted for this passage when the Chorus consists of more mature speakers.

David. From whence comest thou ?

Messenger. Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

David. How went the matter ? I pray thee, tell me.

Messenger. Lo, the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people are fallen and dead. . . .

[Men and women have entered, and are gathered in a crowd on the platform and on the steps.]

Crowd. Woe to us . . . woe to us . . .

Messenger. . . . And Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also !

[There is a silence of horror, then lamentation.]

David [rising]. How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead ?

Messenger. As I happened upon Mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear ; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou ? And I answered, I am an Amalekite. And he said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me : for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen : and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord. *[He lays them before David.]*

First and Second Groups. And David was much moved ; and likewise all they that were with him ; and they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and

for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel ; because they were fallen by the sword.

[*David raises his arms. He and all the people with him break into this song of lamentation.*]

All. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places : how are the mighty fallen !

Some of the People. Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon ; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Others, with David. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings : for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

All the Men. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

All the Women. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.

All. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

A few Women. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

All. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle !

David. O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan : very pleasant hast thou been unto me : thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

All. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished !

[The leaders of the choric groups close the curtains for the last time. The choric line is re-formed.]

First Semi-Chorus. But the righteous live for evermore ; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High.

Second Semi-Chorus. Therefore shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand : for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them.

First Semi-Chorus. So was David chosen out of the children of Israel. How is he numbered among the children of God !

Second Semi-Chorus. He played with lions as with kids, with bears as with lambs.

First Semi-Chorus. Slew he not a giant, when he was yet but young ? and did he not take away the reproach from the people, when he lifted up his hand with the stone in the sling, and beat down the boasting of Goliath ?

Second Semi-Chorus. For he called upon the most high Lord ; and he gave him strength in his right hand to slay that mighty warrior, and set up the horn of his people.

First Semi-Chorus. So the people honoured him with ten thousands, and praised him in the blessings of the Lord, in that he gave him a crown of glory.

Second Semi-Chorus. For he destroyed the enemies on every side, and brought to nought the Philistines, and brake their horn in sunder unto this day.

First Semi-Chorus. In all his works he praised the Holy One most high with words of glory; with his whole heart he sung songs, and loved him that made him.

First and Second Semi-Chorus. The Lord took away his sins, and exalted his horn for ever: he gave him a covenant of kings, and a throne of glory in Israel.

[*The Chorus of Children goes out L. and R., as they entered in the beginning.*]

CURTAIN

THE suggestions for discussion and composition have been made fairly numerous and of varying difficulty in order to provide a choice. It is not intended that every pupil should plough conscientiously through every exercise! Some of the questions should be discussed in class, to collect ideas and determine a line of attack, before they are answered in writing.

The sections on the authors and their work may also be discussed, and amplified.

ON THINKING IT OVER

CLIFFORD BAX: SILLY WILLY

You will probably not be surprised to learn that this play was originally written for marionettes, or that Mr. Clifford Bax is a poet as well as a dramatist. All his work shows his poetic imagination, his delicate sense of the value of words, and his skill in using them—a skill which has enabled him to show us Silly Willy's bright little world as clearly as though we were looking at it through the wrong end of a telescope on a sunshiny day. All the characters are heroes of the puppet-stage, as full of antics as the clever puppet-master can make them, and as surprisingly like human beings as they are queerly unlike them.

ON TALKING IT OVER

1. What are puppets? Have you seen any puppet-plays? (Don't forget Punch and Judy, though they are puppets with a difference.)
2. Would you rather see this play acted by puppets or by living players?
3. The players must wear eighteenth-century dresses. Why?
4. What does "out in Botany Bay" (page 20) tell you about Silly Willy?
5. Which part would you most like to act yourself, and why?

FOR PEN AND PENCIL

6. Write another scene for the play. Mary Ann and Silly Willy might be the principal characters this time; they quarrel, Waggly reconciles them, and they decide to get married.

7. Draw and paint a picture of any scene in the play.

8. Write another verse of Silly Willy's song. The lines must be of the same length (that is, have the same number of beats), and the rhymes arranged in the same way as in the verse on page 11.

9. Write the prescription for Dr. Bedsyde Manners' wonderful medicine. You will find a hint on page 15.

10. Make a model stage-setting for the play, with scenery and furniture drawn and painted on stiff cardboard, cut out and set up on a base of cardboard or wood.

Everything must be to scale, say one inch to one foot, and, unless you consult *Puppetry for School and Home* (see page 219), you must think the whole thing out very carefully before you begin work. A scale plan of the stage will be helpful.

Most probably there are Georgian houses in your town which you can copy for Lady Silverlock's house, and for architecture and furniture you should look at the pictures in such books as *A History of Everyday Things in England*. (See page 218.) If you add cut-out figures in eighteenth-century costume, so much the better.

11. Make puppets for the characters, and give a performance of the play in your model setting. (See *Puppetry for School and Home*.)

BOOKS TO READ

12. *Old King Cole*, a children's play in three acts, by Clifford Bax. (C. W. Daniel.) *The Poetasters of Ispahan*, by Clifford Bax. In *Nine Modern Plays*. (See page 224.)

Four Plays for Children, by Beatrice Mayor.

The Princess and the Woodcutter, by A. A. Milne. In *Eight Modern Plays*. (See page 224.)

NAOMI MITCHISON : NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING

Mrs. Mitchison has written stories, novels, essays, plays and poems, besides fairy plays for young actors. Some of them, recommended below as "books to read," you should get if you can, for you are almost certain to enjoy them; others will appeal to you when you are grown up. She writes usually of old, forgotten, far-off things and battles long ago, and she is never more interesting than when she carries her reader away on the magic carpet of her imagination to ancient Greece, or Rome, or Roman Britain, for these are the places which she knows best of all. To visit them with Mrs. Mitchison as guide is a great adventure.

ON TALKING IT OVER

13. Why did the King so readily agree to give the Wizard Nix-nought-nothing? Does this incident remind you of any other story?

14. What did Mary do to help Nix-nought-nothing, and why did he forget her?

15. Which person in the play shows most bravery?

16. Which scene do you like most? Is there anything in the play which you dislike?

17. Did you feel sure that everything would end happily? Why?

18. Do you know any story in which a young man is helped by the daughter of the wizard or giant who has carried him off, or in which a bridegroom recovers his memory at his wedding feast? If so, tell it to the class.

FOR PEN AND PENCIL

19. Write a scene in which Mary comes to the palace and the Head Cook engages her as kitchen-maid. It should be partly in verse. If it is done well enough it might be acted by members of the form.

20. Write a short story which shows why the King had been so long away from his kingdom at the beginning of the play.

✓ 21. Write what you think of Mary, the Wizard, and the Commander-in-Chief. *For vocal*

22. Which part in the play would you like to act yourself, and why?

23. Make a drawing of the Wizard, from the description on page 25, and paint it.

24. Make a model stage-setting for Scene ii., Scene vi., or Scene viii.

— *motivated malignity*

BOOKS TO READ

25. *Nix-nought-nothing*, by Naomi Mitchison. (Jonathan Cape.) This contains four plays, the others being *My Ain Sel'*, *Hobyah! Hobyah!* and *Elfen Hill*. *Elfen Hill* is reprinted, with commentary and Acting Notes, in *Six Modern Plays for Little Players*, uniform with this volume.

The Hostages, by Naomi Mitchison. (Jonathan Cape.) Stories for boys and girls.

The Highbrow, by Naomi Mitchison. A short story of Sparta. In *Ten Modern Stories* (T.E.S.).

The Princess and the Woodcutter, by A. A. Milne. In *Eight Modern Plays* (T.E.S.).

Tam Lin, Hynd Horn (ballad-plays), *Young Beichan* (ballad), in *Ballads and Ballad-Plays* (T.E.S.).

Fifteen Norse Tales, by Sir George Dasent. Uniform with this volume.

F. AUSTIN HYDE: WIRELESS AND SICIL- LIKE

Dialect is often more lively, and more comic or poetic, than the "King's English," partly because it is so much less prim and well-behaved; and dialect plays or stories sometimes give us humour and tragedy of the best and richest kind because they deal only with simple human things which everybody understands. So it is fortunate for any one to have both the King's English and a good dialect at command, but particularly fortunate for a writer: some of the best modern novels and plays are partly in dialect.

The broad Yorkshire speech of Mr. Hyde's characters—to be exact, the dialect of the North and East Ridings—contributes much to his work. He now simplifies the dialect in his plays before publication, because they are acted in counties as far apart as Essex, Cornwall, and Angus (Forfarshire), where the village players naturally translate them into their own speech; but this simplifying robs the plays of a good deal which must be given back to them in performance. *Wireless and Sike-like*, to give it the original title, has suffered similarly in being revised for this book. Deprived of the old farmer's broad Doric, the play remains an amusing comedy and a

very ingenious setting for a short concert, but in production it will gain a new richness of humour if his part is well rendered in a good rural dialect.

ON TALKING IT OVER

26. This play depends upon a contest and contrast between — and —. Suggest words to fill the blanks.

27. Did you suspect that the old farmer was playing a trick on the boys before he told them? If so, when and why? If not, do you think that the play would be improved by allowing the audience to suspect?

28. What do you think of the way in which the boys speak and act? Is it always true to life?

29. Where does the climax of the play occur? The climax is the point at which the interest reaches its highest pitch.

30. If you look carefully at the cast given on page 62, you will see that the names of all the characters except Henry Mossdrop and Jonathan Broadacres were made from the names of the actors. Say why these two were excepted, and explain the connections in the other cases.

31. Is Geoffrey's mother the old farmer's daughter or daughter-in-law?

32. What is a dialect? What is the difference between dialect and bad English? Why do some people despise dialect? Why is this wrong? Why is it advisable for dialect-speakers to learn "King's English"? Why is it a pity if they forget their dialect in doing so? (Probably you can suggest some more "whys" yourself!)

33. Choose two speakers from the class to represent the old farmer and his wife, and set him to tell her about his adventure with the wireless set. Her part is to interrupt frequently!

FOR PEN AND PENCIL

34. Write down the dialogue suggested in the previous section, arranging the speakers' names and speeches as in a play. If you can write in the dialect of your own countryside so much the better.

35. Draw up a programme of songs and recitations to be "broadcast" during the play.

36. What alterations would you like to make in the play before it was performed in your own village or town? The Acting Notes on page 207 may give you some hints.

37. After you have talked over dialect, write what you think about it.

BOOKS TO READ

38. *Honest Folk*, *The Ship Comes In*, one-act comedies by Austin Hyde.

Seven Short Plays, by Lady Gregory.

Eldorado (in *Eight Modern Plays*), *The Old Bull* (in *Nine Modern Plays*), one-act comedies by Bernard Gilbert.

The Crystal Set, by John H. Bone.

Rory Aforesaid, by John Brandane.

LOUIS N. PARKER: ON BOARD THE
"GOLDEN HIND"

Mr. Parker was director of music at Sherborne School for nineteen years before he became playwright and pageant-master. Since then some fifty plays of his have been successfully staged, and the pageants he directed at Sherborne, Dover, York, and

many other places in pre-war days established a new form of English drama which still remains popular.

In *Drake* he found a subject after his own heart, and he has handled it with characteristic skill, showing in ten strongly dramatic scenes the great seaman's career, from his first introduction to Queen Elizabeth at Hampton Court in 1571 to his triumphant return from the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. The scene reprinted here is from Act II., which deals with Drake's voyage round the world in 1577-81, and Mr. Parker has kindly revised it to make a one-act play complete in itself. But you should certainly read the whole of *Drake*.

ON TALKING IT OVER

39. "By Gor! That's fine!" says Tom Moone (page 92). Do you agree with him?

40. What charges are brought against Thomas Doughty? Who convicts him? What is his punishment?

41. Is there anything in the play which puzzles or surprises you?

42. How does Drake feel towards Doughty?

43. Where does the climax of the play occur?

44. Compare this play with Act II., Scene ii., of *Drake*. What additions has the author made, and why?

45. Find out all you can about one of the following subjects from encyclopædias, histories, etc., and then give a five minutes' lecture on it to the class: Sir Francis Drake; Drake's voyage round the world; Drake and the Spanish Armada; Elizabethan ships; Magellan; Lord Burghley; Christopher Hatton; the musical instruments mentioned on page 84. The last subject serves to remind us that music was much loved and practised in Elizabethan England.

FOR PEN AND PENCIL

46. Write what you think of Doughty's behaviour.
47. Describe briefly what happens in the play.
48. Find a picture of the *Golden Hind*, or another Elizabethan ship, and copy it carefully. (There is a picture in *Drake*.)
49. Draw an outline map of the world, and mark the route of Drake's voyage, filling in the dates at several points. (See an historical atlas, or the reproduction of "The Silver Map of the World" in *Drake*.)

BOOKS TO READ

50. *Drake*, a pageant play, by Louis N. Parker. (John Lane, rs.)
"How the *Golden Hind* Came Home Again," in *Westward Ho!* by Charles Kingsley.
Drake's Drum, a poem by Sir Henry Newbolt.
The Discovery, by Herman Ould. (A play about Christopher Columbus.) In *Eight Modern Plays*.

DAN TOTHEROH: THE STOLEN PRINCE

Mr. Totheroh is an American, not a Chinese, and he does not even live in China; but there is a large Chinese quarter in San Francisco, his native city, and he has seen many amusing performances in the theatre there. They appeal to him strongly, he says, because the Chinese popular plays give the actors more freedom to use their imagination than is possible in the closely-knit productions of our own theatre; so he has written this comedy and others in imitation, with stage directions which show us very clearly how the Chinese would act them.

ON TALKING IT OVER

51. This play is probably different from any others that you have ever seen or read. In what way?

52. Do you agree with Mr. Totheroh that the players are given more freedom to use their imaginations in this kind of play than in an ordinary English one? Or is it the audience who are given this freedom? Or both?

53. Which characters, if any, are the hero and the villain of the play?

54. Were you afraid that Hi Tee and his family would be beheaded?

55. What is the queerest thing in the play? What is the most amusing?

56. If you can remember any other story of a baby who was set adrift on a river, tell it to the class. There is one such story, at least, which you are sure to know.

FOR PEN AND PENCIL

57. Tell the story of Joy in your own words, leaving out the Chorus and Property Man altogether.

58. What are the chief differences between the performance of a play on the Chinese popular stage (according to Mr. Totheroh) and one on our own?

59. Does it make things easier for a dramatist to use a Chorus? If so, in what way?

60. What do you like most and least about this play?

61. Write a play "in the Chinese manner." If you decide exactly what is to go into each scene, several writers can take a scene each.

62. Draw and paint any scene. You must first find some pictures showing Chinese dress, in a geography book, say, or an encyclopædia.

BOOKS TO READ

63. *The Lost Princess*, by Dan Totheroh.
The Thrice-Promised Bride, by Cheng-Chin Hsiung.
 The Nelson Playbooks.
The Melon Thief, by Shigeyoshi Obata. A Japanese farce.

ALLAN MONKHOUSE: THE GRAND CHAM'S
DIAMOND

Mr. Monkhouse may sometimes smile a little sadly over the success of *The Grand Cham's Diamond*. He has written so many better things: delicate comedies, such as *The Education of Mr. Surrage*; a number of tragedies, including one of the very best plays about the war, *The Conquering Hero*; several fine novels; and the many essays and reviews which have made the initials A. N. M. respected by all readers of the *Manchester Guardian*. But he has written nothing else so widely known as this piece of farcical melodrama, which is indeed one of the most popular one-act plays of to-day, and a masterpiece of its own kind.

ON TALKING IT OVER

64. What points in the earlier part of the play, before the diamond is thrown through the window, prepare for things that come later?

65. Are you surprised that Mrs. Perkins behaves so differently from her husband and daughter when the diamond appears? Give your reasons.

66. What is the most amusing thing in the play? What is the most exciting?

67. Perhaps "romantic" is a word that *you* "never

rightly——” You might talk it over and try to arrive at a clear idea of its meaning. Here is a possible starting-point: the publishers of this book, Messrs. Thomas Nelson and Sons, issue a series of volumes on *Astronomy, Engineering, Electricity, Animals of the Sea*, etc., which are called “The Romance of Reality” Series. What does “romance” mean here?

68. When you have discussed the word and looked it up in a good dictionary, say what you think of Mr. Perkins’s explanation of it on page 125.

FOR PEN AND PENCIL

69. Write a short scene in which a reporter interviews the Perkins family. He is trying to find out exactly what happened, and they are all trying to talk at once, each giving a different version of the affair.

70. Write a newspaper account of how the Grand Cham’s Diamond was recovered, with several startling headlines. Make the account as highly coloured as you can.

71. Draw and paint a picture of the Grand Cham as you imagine him.

72. Make a model stage-setting for the play.

BOOKS TO READ

73. *The King of Barvender*, a play in one act by Allan Monkhouse.

The Man in the Bowler Hat, by A. A. Milne.

Shivering Shocks, by Clemence Dane.

MONA SWANN: SAUL AND DAVID

The Authorized Version of the Bible, from which the words of this play are taken, was completed in

1611 by scholars who wrote the noble Elizabethan English which Shakespeare wrote, and who worked zealously at their great task for seven years. Our eternal gratitude is due to them and to the earlier translators whose work they used, for they gave us a translation which is, among other things, a masterpiece of English prose.

For more than three centuries the Bible has been, in many different ways, the most greatly loved and studied of all English books. Now people are re-discovering that the splendid words of the Authorized Version never sound more beautiful than when they are beautifully spoken, and that many of the best Bible stories make most impressive plays when they are sincerely and simply staged. So they are being acted, by boys and girls as well as grown-ups, in churches and church halls, schools and Sunday schools, all over the country.

Miss Mona Swann is one of the pioneers of this great revival, and there have been no more beautiful Bible plays than those which she has adapted and produced.

ON TALKING IT OVER

74. When Samuel told Jesse that one of his sons was to be king, did Jesse expect David to be chosen?

75. Why did Saul send for David? What happened on his first visit?

76. "I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thy heart," says his brother Eliab to David (page 160). What do you think of this?

77. Why did Saul want to kill David? How was it that David escaped? Why did David not kill Saul in the cave?

78. How did Saul learn what his fate was to be? How did he die? How did David receive the news?

79. Does the use of choruses make it easier to put the story into the form of a play, and to act it on a small stage?

80. Which chorus do you like best?

FOR PEN AND PENCIL

81. Write the story of David and Jonathan as it is told in the play.

82. When do you most admire David, and why?

83. What kind of man was Saul? (Remember his good points as well as his bad ones.)

84. Describe what happens in the scene which you like best.

85. Draw and paint, from one of the pictures which you have been shown, David's harp, Jonathan's tent, Goliath's breastplate and helmet, or a Hebrew spear and shield.

86. Make a scale model of the stage shown on page 214.

BOOKS TO READ

87. *At the Well of Bethlehem*, by Mona Swann. (Leopold Hill, 101 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. 3s. 6d. cloth; 2s. stiff paper.) A narrative play in three parts—Ruth the Gleaner, David the Shepherd, Mary the Mother—arranged from the Authorized Version of the Bible.

Three Biblical Dramas, by Clarissa Graves. The Nelson Playbooks.

Old Testament Drama, by M. W. Thomas. Nelson. (Teaching of English series.) Favourite stories, in the words of the Authorized Version, arranged for actors and a narrator.

Everyman; The Interlude of Youth; The World and

the Child, edited by John Hampden. The Nelson Playbooks.

The Three Kings a little Nativity Play, in *Ballads and Ballad-Plays*.

Pandora's Box, by Rosalind Vallance. A play in verse and mimic. In *Three Modern Plays and a Mime*. The Nelson Playbooks.

GENERAL

88. Describe an amusing incident or an exciting incident in any one of the plays.

89. Which character in the book are you most interested in, and why?

90. Which of the plays would you choose for performance (a) at a Christmas party, (b) at your school speech-day, (c) in church, (d) in a small room with no stage? Which play is most suitable for broadcasting?

91. What do you remember about Miss Perkins, Thomas Doughty, Jonathan Broadacres, the Head Cook, and Lee Mee?

92. Make a list of the characters in the two plays which you like best, and then cast them (that is, choose the most suitable actors for the parts) from the members of your own form or dramatic society. Give yourself the part which you would most like to act.

93. Draw, paint, and cut out scenery for one of the plays, and set it up as it would be on the stage. If you can make the characters as well, so much the better.

ACTING NOTES

DETAILED notes on production, acting, and stage management are given in other volumes in this series, especially *Eight Modern Plays* and *Nine Modern Plays*, and some principles of dramatic work with children are formulated in *Ballads and Ballad-Plays*. The brief notes which follow deal only with the main points in production and stage management of the plays in this volume, and are intended for amateurs who have had little experience.

An invaluable note-book for producer, player, stage-manager, or electrician can be made by cutting the leaves from two copies of a play and pasting them on alternate pages of an exercise book.

SILLY WILLY

This play is fully protected by copyright, and no performance may be given unless permission has been obtained in advance from the author's agent, Mr. A. D. Peters, 4-5 Adam Street, Adelphi, London, W.C.2. The fee for every amateur performance is one guinea, payable in advance.

The play takes about twelve minutes.

Silly Willy's song may be sung to the tune of "The Carter," a folk-song collected and adapted by R. Vaughan Williams. (Novello, 2d.)

Silly Willy was originally written for marionettes, and this must be borne in mind if a performance by living actors is to be wholly successful. Such a performance should be gay, bright, quick, and slightly mechanical, with a suggestion of puppets in the movements of the players, and a suggestion of the

toy shop in dresses and stage-setting. The whole play should have the smooth, efficient movement of a revue sketch, with cues taken instantly, and entrances and exits exactly timed. The dresses should be in eighteenth-century style, but must not be elaborate or fussy, and both these and the scenery, if any is used, should be in clear, gay colours and conventional forms. In a word, the whole production should be slightly stylized, because the desired effect is artificial, not naturalistic.

If something of this is made clear to the players they will enter eagerly into the fun of the thing, and boys and girls at least never mind how hard they work at a play once their enthusiasm is aroused. Unless the setting is available from the first, the stage or rehearsal room should be marked out in the dimensions of the setting, with furniture correctly placed, or the exact timing secured in rehearsal will probably be lost in performance. When the players are word-perfect and the play is in good mechanical "going order," producer and cast may confidently settle down to develop those finer points of interpretation which will bring the whole play to life.

The lighting should be hard and brilliant throughout, hardness being secured by using only clear-glass bulbs.

A curtain-setting will serve if necessary, with a traverse curtain hung about half-way up-stage, so that the street scenes can be played in front of it, and the opening in the middle can be used as the front door. It would be much better, however, to have an inner proscenium painted to represent the façade of Lady Silverlocks' house, with a "practical" front door on the left and perhaps another door on the right (not practical) for the sake of symmetry. The opening of this proscenium can be closed by ordinary curtains, or, preferably, by a painted drop-curtain which forms part of the façade. In either case the curtain must

be so arranged that it can be raised or lowered smartly and in silence : a curtain which went up loudly and laboriously would detract a good deal from the effect of the play. The inner stage can be quite small, and the scenery may very well consist of two or three screens with a masked opening between them, up-stage left, to serve as a door.

Silly Willy may have a wooden peg with his knee in the socket, and his foot, strapped up to his thigh, hidden by the long skirts of his coat ; or he may simply walk stiff-legged, perhaps with an improvised splint as a safeguard against lapses of memory ! His laundry basket should be near the wing before Waggly jumps into it, so that he does not have to haul it far, and it could be fitted with small wheels underneath if he finds the hauling difficult.

Waggly is a very important character, and should certainly be provided with a complete skin hired from a theatrical costumier. If this is too expensive, he may be made up with a hired mask, or with grease-paint, crêpe hair, etc.—not forgetting a tail !—to represent a dog dressed as a man. His part must be carefully worked up and rehearsed, and at the end the other characters must dance off the stage as absurdly but as quickly as possible, so that his final *pas seul* may lose nothing of its ludicrous effect.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING

No performance of this play may be given unless permission has been obtained in advance from Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 30 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1. The usual fee for amateurs is one guinea.

The play takes about thirty-five minutes.

The author's stage directions solve, in advance, most of the problems of staging, leaving only one point

of importance to be emphasized: the intervals between the scenes must be very short. This is so easily arranged that nothing except bad stage management can make them long; but in an amateur performance, in which the harassed producer is responsible for every detail of everything, it sometimes happens that no determined effort is made to avoid delays. In this case it is essential that they should be avoided, because seven waits, with the audience talking and the spell broken, would be fatal to so short a play.

If fairly elaborate settings are to be used for the outside of the Wizard's house and the Banqueting Hall, they should be erected behind a traverse curtain, which divides in the middle and hangs about half-way up-stage, and some of the furniture for these scenes may be kept behind the traverse part of the time, if this simplifies the handling of it and relieves congestion in the wings. The other scenes should be played in front of the traverse.

If the whole play is to be given before a plain curtain, the traverse will not be needed.

The scene-shifters must all wear rubber-soled shoes, and must have their exact duties assigned to them individually. Every change of scene must be rehearsed (and timed) until it is made swiftly and quietly. It is a very great help if the scene-shifters know the play well. They must be ready for action instantly the curtain falls: *e.g.* if the "heavy bench" outside the Wizard's house is to serve, with a rough greyish cloth thrown over it, for the "big pine log" in the forest, two of the stage staff (one of them carrying the cloth) must be waiting in the wings to move the bench to its new position, and cover it over. Each of them will know which end of the bench he is to take and exactly where he is to place it. (The position may be marked with chalk if the floor of the stage cannot be seen by the audience.) Possible causes of delay should be foreseen and removed. At the be-

inning of Scene vi., for example, there should be no danger of Nix-nought-nothing and the Wizard having to search for their swords before they can go on : both swords should be in a safe place in the wings where they can be found at once, or entrusted to a stage hand, who will give them to the players at the end of the previous scene.

In Scene v. it will be safer and perhaps more effective to use, instead of a candle, an electric torch, masked to represent, say, a small charcoal brazier.

The lighting in this and the forest scene must be just bright enough for the features of the players to be visible at the back of the hall. The forest scene should be lit in green or blue, from a few bulbs dipped in lacquer, or from one or two flood-lights, made of biscuit tins, with coloured gelatine slides. The effects of the coloured light on clothes and make-up must be tested in advance, or they may be disastrous. Some admixture of coloured light is desirable in the other scenes, as in most plays, because pure white light is hard and unreal. Good lighting is of the greatest importance in any production, it is the most artistic, flexible, and economical of all aids to the actor, and the apparatus can be made by amateurs from the instructions given by Mr. Harold Ridge and Mr. Angus Wilson. (See page 218.)

The author suggests that when Mary calls the birds at the end of Scene ii. a muted gramophone record of birds should be used, and slides with black silhouettes of flying birds should be passed across and across a lantern, in the same direction, so that their shapes pass like shadows across the back-cloth.

The author's general instructions about costumes can be supplemented by reference to any well-illustrated book of fairy tales, or, better still, *Shakespeare for Community Players*, and *The Bankside Costume Book*. (See page 218.)

No effort should be spared to secure technical

efficiency in production, but this is of little value unless it serves a sincere artistic purpose, especially in work with young players, which is designed to be educational in the happiest and most inspiring sense of the word. A production of *Nix-nought-nothing* should be full of the inconsequent poetry of the fairy tale, the actors happily playing at Kings and Wizards rather than playing them, with the fullest possible liberty of interpretation.

WIRELESS AND SICH-LIKE

This play is fully protected by copyright, and no performance may be given unless permission has first been obtained from Mr. J. W. Broadbent, Meanwood Hill, Leeds. The fee for an amateur performance is half a guinea.

The play takes about twenty minutes, without the "concert."

Whether curtains or a realistic box-set be used, the staging is too simple to call for any comment.

The producer's first problem is to find a good grandfather, without whom the play should certainly not be attempted, but even with third-form players this is by no means impossible; the editor has seen the part surprisingly well acted by a boy of eleven. Apart from this, the chief difficulties will probably be in getting the grouping satisfactory and the school-boys natural—difficulties which only thorough rehearsal can overcome.

The concert items must be chosen with great care, and should have a strong local flavour if it can possibly be secured—not a difficult matter in any county which has a dialect literature of its own. Indeed, the whole play should be localized, and we may feel sure that in this case the author would not object to any small adaptations which may be found necessary.

In Hampshire, for example, it will be Hull, not Bournemouth, which is the "foreign spot." The station wave-lengths and other details should be brought up to date, and a few local and topical allusions may very well be introduced: for example, the "broadcast" from Paris may be given, not by Monsieur Siepman, but by the author of the most unpopular French grammar in use in the school!

Far more important than these details, however, is the localization of the grandfather's part, for nearly all the rich, racy humour of the original Yorkshire version has been lost in modifying it for general use. This richness must be restored by free translation into a rural dialect if the play is to be fully successful.

ON BOARD THE "GOLDEN HIND"

This play is fully protected by copyright, and no performance may be given unless written permission has been obtained in advance from the author's agent, Mr. R. Golding Bright, 20 Green Street, London, W.C.2.

The fee is one guinea for each performance.

The play takes about thirty minutes.

Constructed as it is with evident dramatic skill, this play is certain to succeed if acted with the right speed and pressure, and it is specially suitable for performance by boys. The chief points to be observed are the following:

1. *Minor Characters and "Supers."*—The great importance of their share in the play must be explained to them at the beginning; they must be rehearsed as often and as thoroughly as the leading characters; and they must learn to act all the time they are on the stage, to respond in thought and feeling to everything that is said or done, even if they are standing

quite still, because this has an all-important effect upon the atmosphere of the play. There are so many people on the stage that the producer must give special attention to the grouping, which he must settle, in outline at least, before the first rehearsal. The play provides excellent training in team-work.

2. *Form and Tempo*.—The requisite variations in the pace of speech and action must be studied, and atmosphere and emotional tension carefully worked up to the minor and major climaxes, without the effects being made laboured and obvious.

3. *Cues*.—Except when there is a deliberate pause, these must be taken instantly, a point always difficult to secure with amateurs, or the whole play will lose in vitality. This is particularly important for the two crescendos of anger in the clashes between Drake's supporters and Doughty's before the trial.

4. *Staging*.—Plain curtains will be quite adequate, but the play would gain much from a realistic setting (a fine piece of work for senior boys in the school workshop), and from a glimpse through the port-holes of a bright blue sky-cloth, drawn taut to eliminate wrinkles, and brilliantly lit. Every effort should be made to provide a dais (which must not creak) for the raised step at the stern: the producer will find it a great advantage to be able to work in three dimensions instead of two. Genuine antique furniture, candelabra, etc., should be borrowed from a local dealer if possible, but they must not on any account be mixed with modern imitations unless these are absolutely convincing. The stained-glass windows can be made by pasting black and coloured paper on sheets of glass or celluloid. If coloured gelatine is used instead of paper, the work will be more difficult, and the results much better.

5. *Music*.—Amateur companies able to find the Elizabethan instruments and players for them will be very few and very fortunate, for they are most

unlikely to be available outside London or Haslemere. The producer may defy historical accuracy by introducing, say, violin, viola, and 'cello or double-bass, or he may fall back upon a hidden orchestra or gramophone. A good deal of Elizabethan music is issued by the Oxford University Press and other firms, and records of a number of pieces may be obtained. Music may be dispensed with altogether, but the gramophone is so easily available that this should not be necessary. The roll of the drum is an important "effect," for which also a gramophone may be used. "Fortune My Foe" might well be played after the fall of the curtain.

6. *Dress*.—Elizabethan dresses are among the easiest to make at home. (See the notes on page 218.)

7. *Make-up*.—A portrait of Sir Francis Drake should be found and studied. A good one is reproduced as frontispiece to Mr. Parker's *Drake*.

If the players are very young it may be found best to modify make-up considerably in order to avoid a ludicrous contrast between voice and appearance. This, and any other details which may fall short of strict realism, will not prevent the play from succeeding if it is rehearsed with care and acted with spirit.

THE STOLEN PRINCE

No performance of this play may be given unless permission has been obtained in advance from the author's agents, Messrs. Samuel French, 26 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, or 25 West 45th Street, New York.

The play takes about forty minutes in performance.

The author's stage directions provide such full acting notes in themselves that there is very little to add. Thoroughly and intelligently rehearsed in accordance with these directions, the play can hardly

go wrong if producer and players understand clearly that there can be no attempt at the usual realism of the occidental stage. The play is an artless story, with a *motif* which is recurrent in most of the folk-literatures of the world, told in the simplest terms of theatrical make-believe. Adults have often performed it with success; children are still more likely to succeed with it, provided that they are given as much liberty of interpretation as possible. There must be no air of condescension, and no half-hearted feeling that it isn't quite the thing to abandon the familiar stage conventions in this way. The play must be accepted whole-heartedly on its own terms, and imaginative actors will enjoy the unusual freedom in characterization which it gives them, the producer taking care that no one elaborates his part to an extent that disturbs the balance of the play.

The producer will find it worth while to read *The Thrice-Promised Bride* (see page 223), and the acting notes by Mr. M. J. McRobert, whose production of the play reached the final round of the National Festival of Community Drama in 1931. It is a remarkably fresh and delightful comedy.

Dresses for *The Stolen Prince* can be made at home with little difficulty, and will be sufficiently accurate if they appear thoroughly Chinese to the audience.

THE GRAND CHAM'S DIAMOND

The performing rights of this play are fully protected. All applications for permission to perform *The Grand Cham's Diamond* must be made to Messrs. Samuel French, Ltd., 26 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, or Messrs. Samuel French, Inc., 25 West 45th Street, New York.

The fee for each and every representation of the play by amateurs in the British Empire (except Canada) is one guinea ; in America and Canada, five dollars. These sums are payable in advance, and no performance may take place unless a written permission has first been obtained.

The terms for performance by professionals can be ascertained on application.

The play takes about thirty minutes.

Nearly everything that has been said in the Acting Notes to *On Board the "Golden Hind"* applies even more forcibly to this play, and those notes should be re-read in this connection. More than any other form of drama, farce and melodrama depend for their success upon smooth, efficient playing. But Mr. Monkhouse's play, like Mr. Parker's, is written with such skill that it gives the players every possible support ; they can hardly fail to make it a success if they rehearse thoroughly and act with enthusiasm.

The producer must give full attention to the variations in pace and tone. It should be noted, for example, how the quiet realism of the opening and ending heighten by contrast, and at the same time make more convincing, the wildly romantic incidents in the play : the first step towards creating in the audience the "temporary suspension of disbelief" is to convince them that the Perkins family are real, commonplace people. This, and the rest of the play, can be done quite adequately by players of eleven and upwards working under a capable producer. And there is no doubt that they will enjoy themselves !

A curtain-setting will serve if necessary, and even the window may be an imaginary one round the corner of a curtain ; but a "practical" door and window can be fitted into a curtain surround with little trouble, and are very desirable. The window panes should be of real glass, and can be smashed without any danger to the players if the smashing is done with a blow

from a muffled hammer, directed downwards near the bottom of the window. The diamond should not be thrown in at all ; it might hit one of the players, or get lost. Mrs. Perkins should be made responsible for putting it on the floor under the table before the curtain rises ; the audience are much too startled to detect what has really been done. The clock should actually be going in the early part of the play. A long nail, kept in the case for Mrs. Perkins to put *through the wheels, is the surest method of stopping it without damage.* If the stage lights can be controlled by the switch in the room, so much the better ; if not, the person controlling them must have a clear view of the switch, and the Stranger must be told not to take his hand from it until the lights have gone out.

SAUL AND DAVID

No performance of this play may be given unless permission is obtained in advance from Miss Mona Swann, Moira House, Eastbourne.

The words of this chronicle-play of Saul and David are all taken from the Authorized Version of the Bible, except for one or two passages from the Apocrypha. It is suitable to be played by children from ten years of age upwards, and is constructed in such a way as to lend itself to many varieties of use, according to the ability and circumstances of the players. It may be played in entirety (one to one and a quarter hours) ; in groups of two, three, or four selected scenes, dealing with one or another phase of the story : for example, Scenes i., ii., and iii. ; Scenes i. and iii. ; Scenes iv. and v. ; Scenes iv., v., vi., and vii., etc. (fifteen to thirty minutes) ; or any single scene may be played separately, for each has a certain completeness of its own (five to ten minutes).

Only the simplest staging is needed : a curtain-set,

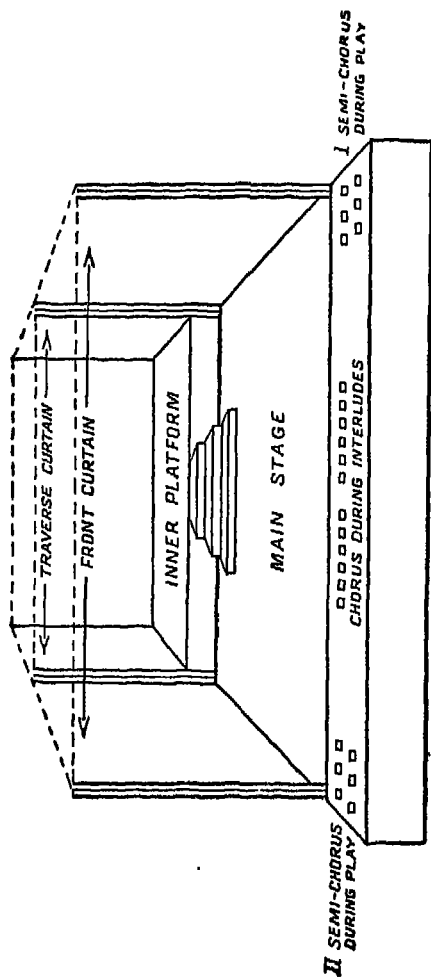


DIAGRAM OF STAGE

preferably of hessian, with an inner platform (about one-third or one-quarter the depth of the whole stage) reached by steps, and separable from the main stage by traverse curtains. This inner curtain, and the steps to it, may be cheaply and easily made of packing-cases of graded sizes, strengthened, and dis-tempered a neutral colour. There is no change of scene, except that sometimes the traverse curtains are open, and sometimes closed.

Costume, too, should be very simple, but the colours rich and clean ; a careful choice of colour scheme will do much to strengthen the varied moods of the scenes. The Chorus of Children should wear short tunics of a uniform neutral tone.

The form of the play, with its use of interpolated narrative, has been chosen in order to preserve as fully as possible the beautiful rhythm and sequence of the Bible words ; and the device of choric interludes is suggested as a means of maintaining continuity of thought throughout the production, while allowing a breathing-space for the players, and a time for the placing of properties. Should the provision of a chorus, however, be difficult, both the interludes and the narrative might be undertaken by two readers or speakers standing or seated on the left and right of the stage opening, or perhaps by a little group of a Jewish grandfather and mother seated on the extreme left or right front, telling two or three children at their feet the old tales of their race. Or, to simplify still further, the interludes might be omitted altogether, and only the narration retained ; in this case the scenes should be played without fall of curtain, changes of scene being indicated by variety of lighting, and such properties as are essential being carried in openly by the actors themselves.

Throughout, nothing must be allowed to disturb the epic quality of the Bible narrative. Whether a few scenes or all are played, unbroken continuity is essen-

tial; great care must be taken that the narration is carefully timed to the action; and the splendid words must be spoken with the dignity and simplicity that such a story, told in our finest English prose, demands.

The directness of the Bible diction, the breadth of its characterization, the spaciousness of its language, and the clear depth of its significance, all are peculiarly suited to the young player; indeed, by memorizing such passages as these, and re-living such episodes, he cannot fail, in some measure at least, to "lay up for himself treasure in heaven." M. S.

The production of this type of Bible drama is more fully discussed in the Foreword to *At the Well of Bethlehem*, and further suggestions will be found in *Choral Speaking of the Bible*. (See "Books to Read" on page 200, and "Some Books for the Amateur," on page 217.)

Some of Nelson's Bible Pictures can be used very effectively in the study or rehearsal of this play. They were all painted by good artists under the close supervision of eminent archæologists.

1. *Bible Wall Pictures*, each 20 by 30 inches, in full colour. No. 72, Saul anointed King; 85, David, the Shepherd Lad; 86, David and Goliath; 87, David and Jonathan; 88, David sparing Saul; 146, Saul gains his Kingdom; 157, Jonathan and his Armour-bearer; 159, Saul rejected by the Lord; 160, David anointed King; 161, Saul tries to kill David; 162, David King over Israel.

These are published at 1s. net each sheet, plain and unmounted, and at higher prices when lined with cloth, mounted, varnished, etc.

2. *Parkside Series of Bible Picture Cards*. Sheet 6. Nos. 85-88 above, with eleven other pictures, each 4 by 3 inches, in full colour on one sheet. These may also be obtained in packets of twelve cards of any one number (e.g. No. 85).

A complete illustrated catalogue of the 296 Bible Pictures will be sent free on application to the publishers, Messrs. Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 3 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.2.

SOME BOOKS FOR THE AMATEUR

"Let's do a Play!" Rodney Bennett. Nelson.
With many illustrations and diagrams by Hugh Chesterman.

A complete guide to the production of plays, concerts, revues, living marionettes, charades, acting games, and all kinds of amateur entertainments from the impromptu "rag" to the full-dress performance, showing exactly how to make the best of difficult conditions and limited resources. The last 140 pages contain material for many programmes, plays, sketches, and recitations.

Choral Speaking, and Spoken Poetry in the Schools. Marjorie Gullan. Methuen

The first book, recently published, is the result of nearly ten years' pioneer work in the making of verse-speaking choirs. The second, now in its fourth edition, has brought new life into speech-training and poetry teaching. Both books deal with practice as well as theory.

Choral Speaking of the Bible. Marjorie Gullan and Mona Swann. Religious Drama Society

A very helpful and illuminating pamphlet.

The Art of Mime. Irene Mawer. Methuen

A complete survey of the subject, historical, theoretical, and practical, by an expert teacher.

Good Speech. The quarterly journal of the Verse-Speaking Fellowship (see below)

This journal records experiments, and gives information regarding all kinds of speech work, ranging

from remedial treatment to choric drama, with special attention to speech-training in schools.

The Small Stage and Its Equipment. R. Angus Wilson.
Allen and Unwin

Invaluable to the amateur, because it offers practicable solutions of the many problems of staging plays in small halls. Full instructions are given for constructing stages, making scenery, lighting equipment, etc. Many diagrams.

The Simplest Stage and Its Equipment. R. Angus Wilson. Allen and Unwin

An abridged version of *The Small Stage*, intended primarily for small halls which have no electric light.

Stage Lighting. C. Harold Ridge. Heffer

A treatise on the art and technique of the subject, which every dramatic society should possess.

A Book of Make-up. Eric Ward. Samuel French

A practical handbook, with working illustrations.

Shakespeare for Community Players. Roy Mitchell.
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The Bankside Costume Book. Melicent Stone. Wells
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Two excellent guides to the whole range of Shakespearean costume. The latter contains full instructions for making the costumes, with diagrams.

British Costume during Nineteen Centuries, with an Appendix on Ecclesiastical Costume. Mrs. Charles Ashdown. T. C. and E. C. Jack

Costume and Fashion. Vol. II., 1066-1485. Herbert Norris. Dent

A History of Everyday Things in England. M. and C. H. B. Quennell. Batsford. Vol. I. (1066-1499) ; Vol. II. (1500-1799)

Costume books, illustrated in colour and line, which are invaluable for reference.

A List of Plays for Girls and Women, A List of Plays for Boys and Men, compiled by the Junior Drama Committee of the British Drama League. Nelson

Each list enumerates some 200 plays, with a summary of plot, number of characters, settings, costumes, royalties, etc., so that it is a very useful reference-book. The plays are classified according to length, costume, etc., etc. Book lists and indexes.

Puppetry for School and Home. H. W. Whanslaw. With 4 colour plates and 20 drawings, Nelson

A complete guide to the making of puppets and a puppet theatre.

Amateurs will find it well worth while to get into touch with the following organizations :

The British Drama League, 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1. This incorporates the Village Drama Society.

The Verse-Speaking Fellowship, c/o The Speech Institute, 56 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1.

The Religious Drama Society, S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, London, W.C.2. An inter-denominational Society.

The secretaries of the above will be pleased to send full details of the advantages and terms of membership.

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